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OR,
The Boy Detective's Big Innings.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF "OLD RIDDLES," "CIBUTA JOHN,"
"REDLIGHT RALPH," "AIR-LINE LUKE,"
"GILBERT OF GOTHAM," "DISCO
DAN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

IN QUEST OF ADVENTURE.

"SWEET pertaters! Skinny, your fortune is
made."

"How d'ye make that out?"

"Jest lend me yer ears fer a minnit an' I'll
read this notice to ye. It runs as follers:

"WANTED—A very thin boy for special work.
Must not be under sixteen years old, of fair strength,
and intelligent. Apply at three o'clock to Professor
Appletree, No. —, — street, New York."

"GOOD-BY, BROADWAY BILLY!" CRIED WHITECLOVER. "WE ARE SORRY TO PART
WITH YE, BUT PART WE MUST."

The speakers were Broadway Billy, and his partner, Skinny.

To those who have read all or any of the previous "Broadway Billy" stories, no introduction of these two lads is necessary. At the same time, they will no doubt pardon a few words of explanation for the benefit of those who meet our jolly young detective and his thin partner for the first time in the present story. Billy, whose name was William Weston, had formerly been a bootblack, and so had Skinny. They had saved their money carefully, and were now owners of a prosperous little corner stand. Billy was, in his way, something of a detective, and many and exciting were the adventures he had met with in his short career. He had friends by the score, and was on good terms with the police, having more than once lent them valuable aid in working up cases against those who lived lawless lives. Skinny was nothing of a detective, though justly proud of the achievements of his partner, but he was all business, and if their stand did not prosper it would certainly not be his fault.

It was early in the morning, and Billy had just arrived at the stand. There he found his partner already on duty, preparing for the trade of the day. Billy had a morning newspaper in his hand, and his first words were those with which our story opens.

"There is no such notice there," protested Skinny. "You are tryin' ter stuff my head this mornin'."

"Look fer yerself then, my gay an' festive fat partner," invited Billy, and he handed over the paper, pointing to the place.

Skinny took it and read the advertisement, finding it just as it had been read aloud by Billy.

"You see it is there, don't ye?" laughed Billy.

"Yes, I see it is there," Skinny admitted; "but what does it mean?"

"Why, I suppose it means just what it says. It is the chance of your lifetime, Skinny, and you do not want to let it slip. It may be the making of ye. You see, it calls for a very thin boy, and that just hits you. Then the age required is all right, too. There is only one drawback that I can see."

"What is that?" Skinny inquired.

"It says the applicant must be intelligent."

"Then it would never hit you, Billy, that is a sure thing."

"Oh, it don't refer to me, anyhow; it calls fer a thin boy. That is you. I am sorry that you do not fill all of the requirements."

"Well, never mind that nonsense, but get to work here and help me make ready fer business."

The two set to work, and for some time they were too busy to think about the peculiar advertisement.

Skinny, by the way, should the reader not be aware of the fact, was remarkably thin. He was perfectly healthy, but was about as thin a boy as the city could show. He was so thin that Billy often declared that it would take two of his size to make a visible shadow.

When their work was done, Billy adverted again to the advertisement of Prof. Appletree.

"Without any joking, Skinny," he confessed, "I would like to know what the perfesser wants of a thin boy. What can be th' special work that he has for a thin boy ter do? Why wouldn't a fat boy do as well? I have an idee that I will go round there an' see th' old gentleman this afternoon, an' if I find there is a good openin' fer you to clean out th' gas-pipes of a big hotel, or somethin' of that sort, I will drop a good word fer you."

"You needn't trouble your head about that. If you are so mighty anxious ter know somethin' about it, I will go around myself."

"Skinny, do you mean ter tell me that you have got th' nerve ter go 'round an' offer yerself ter that perfesser?"

"That is about it, Billy."

"Then I'll go with ye, jest fer th' fun o' th' thing. There is fun ahead, that I am sure of. Somethin' tells me that we are on th' eve of some sort of a diffikilty, but what it is I can't imagine. Neverth'less, we will go 'round an' interview th' perfesser. I will go as your manager, you know."

For a wonder, Skinny was into the thing with all his heart. It was not very often that he took part in any of Billy's ventures, but here was one in which he considered that he would be taking the leading part, and his curiosity was aroused to learn what was wanted of a thin boy.

"Now, Skinny," demanded Billy, "I want ter know if you mean business."

"That is just what I do, Billy, fer a fact. I

am interested in th' thing, an' I would like ter know what it all means. This is th' first time that I ever heard of any such a want as this."

"Th' same here, partner, an' I am with ye. We will have our respected mothers come out this afternoon an' attend to th' business of th' firm, and we will go 'round an' see th' perfesser. I am sure there will be some fun fer us, even if th' profit isn't very large. I'll oil up my tongue an' git ready fer th' interview. It is too bad that I was born tongue-tied, fer it puts me at a big disadvantage when there is any talkin' ter be done."

Truth was, there was no end to Billy's tongue when he once set it to running.

"Yes, it is really too bad about that," Skinny humored. "Never mind, though, I will be on hand to help you out if you get stuck."

There was little danger of anything of the kind happening to Broadway Billy.

According to their arrangement, that afternoon the two boys had their mothers come out and take charge of their business, and they set out to interview Prof. Appletree.

It was near the hour of three when they arrived at the place named in the advertisement, and they found a score or more of thin boys awaiting to be admitted to the house.

Billy cast his eyes over the group with a business-like air, and said:

"Skinny, th' place is yours. You are th' thinnest boy here, by long odds. It might fall to th' lot o' some o' these, if you wasn't here, but with you on th' ground they don't stand no show at all. There's two or three purty thin ones, but they look so awful sickly that I'd be afraid ter bet that they will live a week. They look like they had been feedin' too much on cigarettes. You've got some blood in ye, I am proud ter say, even if there isn't much of ye."

The other boys eyed Skinny with jealous eyes, and two or three of them gave up their places at once and went away. Not so the others, however; they meant to see it out, now that they had come there.

"Hey, Mike," one called out to another, "we'd better go home. D'ye see th' live skeleton?"

"Yes, I see it," was the response, "but I sha'n't give up. Th' gov'ner didn't put his ad. in fer a skeleton."

Many other remarks were passed, but Skinny paid no attention to them; taking his place in the line to await the opening of the door.

"I hope you don't put yerself up fer a thin boy, do ye?" one of the lads asked of Billy.

"Well, hardly," was the reply. "You see I am manager of this shadder here," indicating Skinny, "and I had ter come along with him ter keep him from blowin' away, an' ter see that he placed himself against a proper background, so's th' perfesser could see him with his miker-scoop."

This created something of a laugh among the boys, and another one or two fell out of the line.

The others tried to bribe Skinny to go away and leave the field to them, and, taken all in all, they had considerable of fun.

Three o'clock came, and promptly on the minute the professor opened the door and ran his eyes along the line.

"You boy, there," he said, when his gaze rested upon Skinny, "come forward."

"Do you refer ter this shadder?" asked Billy, drawing his partner out of the line.

"Yes; but what have you to do with him?"

"I am his manager," Billy explained, as he led Skinny forward.

"His manager? What do you mean by that? I have no dealings with second parties, young man."

"Jest so. You wouldn't expect this shadder ter trust himself out of th' house alone, though, would ye? Hardly, with th' wind blowin'. Besides, I had ter come along ter help ye hold th' mikerscoop while ye look at him."

The professor smiled, and bade Skinny come up the steps.

Skinny complied, Billy followed him, and the professor put several questions in rapid succession, to all of which the boy was able to reply in a satisfactory manner.

"D'ye think he will do?" asked Billy.

"Yes," answered the professor, "I think he will. The rest of you," turning to the crowd, "may go away. If I find this boy does not answer my purpose, the same notice will appear in the paper again to-morrow, but it will be useless for any of you to apply, for I shall want a smaller boy than any of you."

With many a jeer and jibe at Skinny, the other boys took themselves off, and the professor invited Skinny to enter the house.

Skinny stepped within, but when Billy started to follow, the professor stopped him.

"I do not want you," he said.

"I know that well enough," returned Billy, "but I can't let that boy out of my sight. I am responsible fer him, an' you have no idee what a trouble it is ter find him when once he gits out from under yer eye. Ain't that so, Skinny?"

Skinny admitted that such was the case.

"But," the professor insisted, "I only want one boy, and that is all I will allow to come in."

"Then you will have ter look fer another subject," declared Billy, "for this lean apology fer a shadder can't go in unless I do. That is as flat as a pavin'-stone."

While this was being said, Skinny stepped out upon the stoop again and awaited the result.

"Is it your wish, as well as the wish of your friend, that he should come in with you?" the professor asked, addressing him.

"That is th' way we travel," answered Skinny, boldly.

"Well, if that is the case, come in. It must be clearly understood, however, before we go any further, that you are to keep secret what you shall see while in this house. Do you agree to do this?"

"Yes," they both responded, "we agree to that."

"Very well, then, follow me up-stairs."

CHAPTER II.

A HOUSE OF WONDERS.

PROFESSOR APPLETREE was a man about fifty-five or sixty years of age. He was almost completely bald, having only a fringe of hair around the base of his skull, and that as white as snow. On the top of his bald pate he wore a close-fitting cap of red silk, which gave him a rather peculiar appearance. He was tall and lean, and rather poorly attired.

His house was one of the old-fashioned ones such as are common on that street, and the whole front of it was closed up as tight as a drum. In passing it, no one would suspect it was inhabited. The only clew to a close observer would be the marks on the dusty and dirty steps and stoop, and the brightness of the door-knob.

Broadway Billy, used as he was to taking close observation of such things, noted all these little points at once, and stored them away. Not that he thought much of them, but it had grown to be a habit with him.

When the professor closed the door after them, the hall was left in almost total darkness. It was entirely unfurnished, and their steps sounded strangely hollow on the bare floor.

Having locked the door the professor led the way up-stairs, the boys following close upon his heels, Billy whispering to Skinny to keep a stiff upper lip.

It must be confessed that Skinny was not a little nervous. It was about his first venture into anything of this kind. To Billy, however, it was nothing, for he had been into so many tight places, and had had so many adventures and narrow escapes, that he was ready for anything that might turn up. He had no idea, however, that there was any danger ahead.

When they reached the second landing a window in the rear gave them a little more light, and they could see what kind of a house they had got into.

Here, too, were the first signs they had seen of any furniture or other proof of real occupancy. An open door showed them a room that was evidently used for a kitchen, and its state of wild confusion was sufficient proof that there was no woman living there. The professor must be his own housekeeper, they rightly thought.

Their conductor led them through this room into another, where they found a table in the middle of the floor covered with books of various kinds, and in one corner another pile of books that reached half way to the ceiling. This room was dirty and dusty, having never seen the use of a broom since the professor had lived there, as the boys naturally concluded.

"This is my study," the professor announced, with a wave of his hand. "Pray be seated, and we will have a little talk. You must not mind that things are somewhat dirty and out of order, but I could never put up with the trouble and expense of a housekeeper. Not that the expense would matter so much, but the trouble—I could never stand it. I tried it for a few months some years ago, and had to give it up. She was a good old lady, and tried her best to please me. I have no doubt, but I had to let her go. When I would be lost in some deep problem, and almost on the point of its solution, she was bound to interrupt me with the announcement that

dinner was ready, or some other trifling thing. Now there is no one to interrupt me, and I eat where and when it suits me. But, this is not to the point, young gentlemen. What are your names?"

The boys gave their names again, having already done so once, and the professor evidently stored them away in his memory.

"You no doubt thought my advertisement for a thin boy a little peculiar," the man next observed, "but only a thin boy will answer my purpose. I think you will do, my young friend," to Skinny, "but I cannot be sure until I try you. Now, once more I must ask you if you are perfectly willing to keep secret what you shall see here."

"That depends a good deal on one thing," answered Billy.

"What is that?" the professor asked.

"It is jest this," Billy went on to explain: "If your business is all right an' accordin' ter law, we will keep as mum as mice about it. On th' other hand, if it is anything in the line o' crooked work, you had better not let us inter it at all."

"Do not imagine for a moment, young man," the professor hastened to assure, "that there is anything of the sort going on here. It is not very likely that I would have two such rattle-brained boys as you come in if my secret was anything of a criminal nature. No, it is nothing like that. I am at work upon a great machine, which is not yet patented, and I do not want any one to know anything about it. If the thing gets noised abroad I shall be run to death by newspaper reporters. You see how it is, do you not?"

"Yes," answered Billy, "we see. You needn't be afraid of our runnin' off with yer ideas. We don't know much, anyhow, and we know a good deal less about patent machines and sich like."

"Then you perfectly agree and promise that you will make no mention of what you are to see?" the professor inquired again, this being his anxious point.

"Yes, we 'gree and promise that," assured Billy, "so trot out yer masheen an' let's see what it is ye want o' Skinny."

"Very well, come on up to my workshop, and from there we will ascend to the roof, where the machine is."

This was by no means all of their conversation, but it is the substance of the whole and all that we care anything about.

The man led the way from the room and ascended to the top floor of the house, the boys following at his heels, and when they arrived there a new sight met their eyes. All the partitions on this floor had been removed, and there was one big room the whole size of the building. In this room were benches and tools of every description. In one corner were a furnace and anvil, the latter resting upon blocks of rubber so that the sound would be deadened when the old man was at work at it. In another place were carpenter tools of all sorts, and here and there were iron and wood of various descriptions.

In the middle of the room was a broad set of steps leading up to the roof, the door at the top being now closed.

"This is my workshop," announced the old man, with a wave of his hand. "Here are all my tools and materials, and from this room many a valuable invention has been born to the world."

This was not said in a spirit of boasting, but in a very matter-of-fact way.

"And what is the work that you have laid out for my semi-invisible friend here ter do?" inquired Billy, anxious to come to the point and learn all.

"In order to explain that," was the answer, "we shall have to go on up to the roof. Follow me."

The professor led the way, and when he reached the top of the stairway he opened the door and the boys followed him out.

There, to their surprise, they found that the entire roof of the house was covered with a temporary shed, and under that covering, on the top of the house proper, lay the most peculiar-looking machine it had ever been their privilege to look upon. At the first sight it had more the appearance of a gigantic crab than anything else that they could compare it to.

"What in th' name o' goodness is that thing?" asked Billy, as he stood and gazed at it.

"That," the professor answered, "is a machine to revolutionize the world."

"But what is it?"

"It is something that will put steam to shame, and mark the decline of railroads and steamships."

The professor's breast swelled with pride as he spoke.

"That ain't to the p'int yet," urged Billy.

"Can you not guess what it is?" the man asked.

"Don't reckon I can," responded the boy, "unless it is ter be a flyin' machine."

"That is just what it is, and nothing else," the professor acknowledged.

"Great moons and stars! Skinny, th' perferer wants yer take th' first fly in his masheen, 'cause you are a light weight. Won't you look purty, sailin' up ter th' moon? Ha, ha, ha!"

Thus Billy exclaimed, giving his thin partner a slap on the back that almost dislocated his neck.

"No, you are wrong there," the professor corrected, "for I shall be the one to take the first trip, when the thing is done. What I want of your friend is to help me in some work which I cannot do alone, and which only a very slim person can accomplish. Take a look at the thing if you want to, to satisfy your curiosity, and then we will get to work."

The boys walked all around the huge monster, as it lay there on the roof of the house, looking at it in wonderment and awe, and when they had done they announced that they were ready for the work.

"In about one month more," the professor volunteered, "the machine will be ready for use, and then I shall take down this temporary shed, and it will have the free air of the heavens over it. Then up and away!"

If the professor was a "crank," there was certainly method in his madness, and he was a mechanic of no mean order.

We shall not attempt to describe his machine minutely, for the interest of our story does not hang altogether upon that, and besides it would be very unfair to the professor for us to do so. It was many feet in length and breadth, from tip to tip, and head to tail, it being built something after the manner of a bird, while the body of the thing was in proper proportion. The body was made of thin sheet steel, and the wings and tail of light but very strong steel and wood.

Stepping up to it, the professor clapped his hand down sharply over a little hole in the top, when instantly the wings and tail stiffened out, and the machine itself was nearly raised clear of the floor.

The boys were filled with wonder and amazement.

"You see the effect of something that you are not old enough to understand," the professor remarked. "This machine is constructed upon true scientific principles. It will be self-supporting in the air at a height of fifty feet from the ground, with one man of one hundred and eighty pounds aboard. Can you understand that?"

The boys had to confess that they could not.

"You see," the savant went on, and of course we are at liberty to tell all that he was willing to disclose of his wonderful invention, "you see, every part of this machine is hollow. The material, as it stands, weighs a certain number of pounds. When I shall have exhausted the air inside of it, however, it will weigh less than nothing, on the known principles of vacuum and displacement. When this is done, it will rise to a height of fifty feet, as I said before, with me aboard of it. But, as you cannot understand anything of this, let us get to work."

"Right you are," agreed Billy. "It is too deep for my think machine, so it is only a waste of breath for you to tell me about it. If you only get up to fifty feet with th' thing, though, I don't see how you are goin' ter fly out of th' city with it."

"That is a very natural thought," responded the professor, "and I will explain the point to you. In those silk bags which you see yonder are four small balloons, which I shall attach to the machine when I am ready to try it, and I can rise to any height I desire. You see the thing is perfect in every detail, and the name of Professor Appletree is bound to rank second to none in the world of invention. I am free to say these things to you boys, for I know your minds are not mature enough to remember and repeat it all, but I would not disclose as much to older heads for the world. But, enough of this; let us to the business in hand."

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER CHARACTER APPEARS.

HAVING allowed the two boys into his den of secrets, as we will call it, the old man was not averse to giving them a little information concerning his plans and intentions. As he said,

however, he would not have done so had they been men instead of boys.

Considering that he had told them enough, he now came to business, and let Skinny know what it was he wanted him to do.

"You see these holes which I have drilled into each side of my pretty bird, in the body here," he said, indicating with his finger as he spoke.

"Yes," the boys responded.

"Well, two attachments have to be put on there. You see I have them all ready, but I cannot put them on alone. I am too large to get into the body of the machine, and even if I could, I could do nothing without some one on the outside to do the work here. Now if you can get in there, and will assist me by putting these bolts through the holes from the inside, while I fasten them on the outside, I shall soon have the job done."

Skinny looked at the hole in a dubious sort of way.

"I don't know about gettin' in there," he reflected. "What if I git fast an' can't git out ag'in?"

"Oh, there is no danger of that. If you can get in you can certainly get out. If you should get fast, though, I can take off the top in an hour or so."

"An' what is th' pay ter be?"

"Two dollars."

"All right, I'll try it."

Having agreed to the terms, and made up his mind that he would undertake the work, Skinny threw off his hat, coat, and vest and was ready.

The professor helped him up to the top of the body of the machine, and Skinny put his feet into the hole and began to wiggle his way in. His legs and body went in without much trouble, but when it came to his shoulders, it was not so easy. He managed to get in, however, and announced that he was ready for the work.

There is no need for us to dwell upon the particulars of the job. The professor found that Skinny, thin and wiry, could move about in the narrow body of the machine quite freely, and in about an hour the work was satisfactorily completed.

The boy had quite a little trouble in getting out, finally succeeding, and the professor complimented him highly.

They all went to the next floor, where Skinny washed himself, and the professor paid him the sum agreed upon.

"You have well earned the money," he said, "and I thank you besides. If I should want anything more of the kind done, I shall certainly send for you. Where do you live?"

Skinny told him where he could be found, and he and Billy prepared to take their leave.

"I'll tell ye what it is, Mister Plumtree—"

"Appletree," the professor corrected.

"I knowed it was a tree of some kind, anyhow," Billy modified; and he continued: "I'll tell ye what it is, I would like ter see that flyin' machine when ye git it all done an' ready fer business."

"Well, my boy, I shall be proud to show it to you," the professor promised. "As you have now seen it I have nothing to conceal from you, and when it is done I will let you know and you can come around and inspect it again."

"Thank you," said Billy. "You don't want ter fergit yer word, fer you kin bet that I won't."

"Oh, I shall remember you, my boy, you may depend on it."

Billy had a great deal more to say, for he was not a boy of few words, but at last the professor managed to get them out of the house and the door shut after them, and the two boys walked away.

"My, oh, my!" the professor mused, as he made his way up-stairs again, "that boy is the greatest talker I ever met in my life. I wouldn't want to spend a whole day in his company; and yet I like him, too."

Just then there came a ring at the rusty, but loud-sounding door-bell.

"Goodness me!" the professor exclaimed, as he turned and made his way down again, "have they come back?"

When he reached the door and opened it, he found there a man whom he evidently knew.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" he observed; "come in."

"Yes, it's me!" was the response, and the caller stepped in and closed the door after him.

He was a man about thirty years of age, rather good-looking, but having a rakish air about him that was not to be complimented. He was well dressed in the height of fashion, but it was a little overdone, and one well versed in Gotham life and character would have set him down for a well-fixed Bowery sport, with the

chances about two to one in favor of his being a "sharp" and gambler.

This young man's name was Sidney White-clover, and he was the professor's nephew. He was on good terms with the old man, since he had a certain interest in all the inventions his uncle put through, by virtue of now and then advancing money to carry on the work. Besides, the professor occasionally did an odd job in the way of making tools of a suspicious kind for his nephew's friends.

"What brings you around, Sidney?" the professor asked, as they went up-stairs. "I did not expect to see you again so soon."

"No, I did not think of paying you another visit so soon, either," was the response. "I have lost a letter, however, and as I was here in your den last night, I have come around to see if you have found it."

"No, I have not seen anything of it," was the old man's answer. "What sort of letter was it?"

"It was one that I would not care to have any one get hold of. It was not a love letter, as you may think, but a letter of business. Come, let's go up to the roof, for I may have dropped it out of my pocket there when I was looking at your machine last night."

"Very well, we will go up, but I have been at work up there all day, and I certainly would have seen it if it was there."

"It might have missed your eye, though. We will go and take a look."

The two went up to the roof, and there White-clover made a thorough search for the missing letter, but without finding it.

"You see I was right," observed the old man. "If it had been here, I would certainly have found it."

"It is plain that it is not here," meditated White-clover, "and I would like to know where I have lost it. Confound it! it is just my luck."

"What is in it that it is so important?"

"It concerns that little beauty that I am trying to marry."

"And who was it from?"

"From Mrs. Fauntleroy."

"Well, if you can remember what was in it, why trouble your head about it? If not, it will not take you long to run up and see Mrs. Fauntleroy and have her repeat what she said."

"That is not it. The letter should not fall into the hands of any one else, and for that reason I am anxious to find it. You do not know how important it is."

"No, since you have not seen fit to tell me about it."

"You have not asked me. I will tell you, however, that it concerns that fortune I am promised if I can marry the girl within six months."

"Ha, then you are likely to lose that?"

"I certainly shall if I do not succeed in marrying the girl, and I may lose it anyhow. Mrs. Fauntleroy has learned that the third guardian of the girl, one Stanton Gildersleeve, is about to come to New York, and it is to our interest all around that he does not discover either Mrs. Fauntleroy or the girl. She wants me to see to it that his stay in the city is short. She thinks that I can make it so warm for him that he will be glad enough to get back into the country again."

"And if he finds the girl it will knock your plans in the head?"

"It certainly will."

"Then you must see to it that he does not find her."

"I shall do my best, you may be sure of that. But, where in the world is that letter?"

"If it is lost it is lost, and there is an end of it. You will have to take the chances of its turning up again. She did not write the names of the parties out in full, did she?"

"That is just the trouble; she wrote them only too plain. I shall put a flea in her ear about it when next I see her, too."

"I hope you did not contemplate any foul play with the countryman, did you? I would not wish you to enter into anything of that sort. I am anxious enough to see you get hold of the money, for I need the loan you have promised me; but I do not want to see you go into any foul game to get it. That is to say, I do not want you to undertake to do any harm to this man Gildersleeve."

"Oh, no; I would not enter into anything of that sort, as you ought to know. I shall not hesitate to turn him back home again, though, if I can fall in with him. If he once meets the girl, as Mrs. Fauntleroy assures me, it will be all up with my prospects in that direction."

"Then he must not meet her. But, say, have you stopped to think that there is some secret

in this game, and one which Mrs. Fauntleroy does not want the girl to learn?"

"Of course there is, but I cannot find out what it is, nor do I care. If I can collar ten thousand dollars by simply marrying so pretty and charming a girl, you can bet that I will do it willingly enough, and no questions asked."

"That is all right, too; but, if you could fall in with this man Gildersleeve and get the secret out of him, it might be worth more to you than the ten thousand."

"You are a deep one, uncle, and no mistake. I guess there is no bigger game in the thing for me, however, so I will be content with what I have in sight, and not let that slip for an uncertainty."

"No, I would not have you do that. At the same time, however, I would be on the watch for the other side of the story, and if it promises bigger reward, take it up in place of the one you are on now."

"Yes, I shall try to learn more about it as I go along. Well, I will be going. If you should find that letter send me word and I will come and get it."

"Yes, I will do that. Are you off now?"

"Yes, I will go. By the way, how did you make out with your advertisement for a thin boy?"

"Oh, grandly! I found the the thinnest boy you ever saw. He was brought here by a friend of his, who declared that he was afraid to allow him to come alone, for fear the wind would blow him away. And such a boy to talk—the friend of the thin one, I mean; he would make a lawyer dizzy. He called himself Broadway Billy, I believe."

"Broadway Billy!" cried White-clover, and he sprung to his feet with blanched face.

CHAPTER IV.

IT GROWS INTERESTING.

"SKINNY, you owe me a dollar," said Broadway Billy to his partner, as they walked away from the house of Prof. Appletree.

"What do I owe you a dollar for?" demanded Skinny, ready to dispute the claim.

"Didn't I get ye th' job?"

"Didn't I do th' work?"

"That is jest what I am comin' at. I got th' job an' you done th' work. Fer them reasons it is plain that half of th' boodle order be mine. You want ter pony up, my fat partner, like a little man."

"Do you allus share with me when you happen ter win a little reward at your detective work?"

"We don't work tergether in that, though."

"What is th' reason we don't? Don't I do your work an' my own too at the corner stand while you are at it?"

"An' don't I allus make a difference in th' profits when we settle? You can't git out of it, Skinny, you owe me half o' that dollar."

"It was two."

"So much th' better. Fork it right over."

"Not by a good deal I won't. This is th' first money that I ever won on my thinness, an' I mean ter hold fast ter it fer luck."

"Oh, well, if that is yer idee I won't press ye further. You might treat ter a glass o' soda, though."

"All right, I'll do that. Come right—Hello! we've got ter go back ter th' perfesser's."

Skinny had thrust his hand into his pocket to get some change when he stopped short with that exclamation.

"Got ter go back ter th' perfesser's!" repeated Billy: "what have we got ter go back there fer?"

Skinny drew a letter from his pocket.

"Here is a letter that I found down in th' bottom of that flyin' machine," he declared. "I felt it an' put it inter my pocket, intendin' ter give it ter th' old man when I kem out, but I forgot all about it. We'll go right back an' do it now."

"We won't be in a dreadful rush about it," observed Billy, calmly: "we will attend ter that soda th' first thing on th' programme, if you please."

"Certainly, we will see ter that ter once, an' then, we will go. It may be somethin' that th' old man would not want ter lose, an' he may give us another dollar or so fer bringin' it ter him."

"Mebbe so, but I reckon not. I'll take a little pineapple, a good deal of th' cream, an' plenty of fizz, if you please. What is yours, Skinny?"

They had made their way to the soda fountain now, and Billy's order was out of his mouth before Skinny began to think about his. The

latter soon decided what he would indulge in, however, and their thirst was soon satisfied.

"Now," reminded Skinny, as they turned away, "we will go an' take th' letter back ter th' perfesser."

"Jest so," agreed Billy, "but first of all we will take a look at th' said letter, if you don't greatly object ter that."

Skinny handed it over for inspection.

Billy took it and read the address upon it, which ran as follows:

"SIDNEY WHITECLOVER, ESQ.

"No. —, — Street, New York."

"Sweet pertaters!" exclaimed Billy, the moment he read it, "I know somethin' about that feller, Skinny, sure's ye'r born!"

"Ye do? What do ye know about him?"

"I don't know any good about him, that is a sure thing. He is a sharper, an' I wouldn't trust him out of sight in daylight, if there was anything he could git away with that was layin' round loose."

"Where did ye git all yer information?"

"I don't pull time stroke with th' detectives fer nothin', an' whenever I kin pick up a p'int er two, I don't let 'em slip."

"Then you are enter his size, are ye?"

"You kin bet I am, as big as a cow. I guess he knows more or less about me, too, fer I helped ter send a pal o' his up th' river once."

"Then I wonder how his letter kem ter be in old Appletree's masheen?"

"That is jest what I was tryin' ter git through my head when you spoke. It is somethin' of a mystery on th' face, an' no mistake. We'll take a look at th' inside of th' thing an' see what we kin learn there."

"That ain't th' right thing ter do, is it?" questioned Skinny.

"Well, it ain't jest accordin' ter th' rules o' ittykit in th' best s'iety, my honest partner," Billy owned, "but, that don't make no sort o' difference with me. I am well aware what sort o' feller this White-clover is, an' I am goin' ter see what this letter has ter say ter him. If it was addressed ter any honest man that I know, I wouldn't think of openin' it any sooner than you would."

"Well, go ahead if you want ter, but it ain't none o' my doin's."

"That is all right; I take th' bull risk o' th' job. You see it ain't sealed, sence it has been already opened, so it ain't much ter take th' letter out an' take a bird's-eye view of th' contents."

As he spoke, the boy drew the letter out.

"If it is a tailor bill, or a love letter, or anything in that line," he added, "I will see that th' Bowery dude gets it all in good order. If it happens ter be anything that is crooked though, then let him look out, fer William o' Broadway will be on his trail afore he is aware of it."

Opening the folded letter as he was saying this, a tin-type picture fell out upon the pavement at his feet.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, "it must be a love letter, an' th' gal has sept him her phiz. Let's see it, Skinny."

"Not much gal about that feller," declared Skinny, as he picked the picture up and glanced at it.

"No, I should say not," agreed Billy, as he too got a look at the face it portrayed.

"It may be his dad," Skinny suggested.

"We shall soon see," added Billy, "fer no doubt th' letter will throw some light onter th' subject."

Spreading out the sheet, the boy began to read it aloud in a low tone for the benefit of his partner. It read thus:

"NEW YORK, July —th, 1888.

"No. — street.

"MR. WHITECLOVER:—

"I have learned that Stanton Gildersleeve has started for New York. He is, as I have told you, one of Luella's guardians. He must not learn where I am, nor must he see Luella. If he sees her, your chance is gone. You must see to it that his stay in New York is very short. I inclose a tin-type likeness of him, one that my thoughtful friend sent me in his letter. You will thus be enabled to know him at sight. It will pay to have a man watch at the ferry, I think. Remember, ten thousand dollars and the charming Luella, if you can get rid of this man quickly; if you fail and let him foil you, you lose all.

Your friend,

"MRS. FAUNTLEROY."

When he had finished reading the letter, Billy held it out at arm's length and gave vent to a long whistle.

"What d'ye think of it?" interrogated Skinny.

"I think there is another diffikilty a-brewin', that is what I think, Skinny, an' I think that

William o' Broadway will have ter be in at th' death, as usual. You kin bet nigh that this Whiteclover feller has got some pizen business on hand, an' if I ain't very much mistaken I think I shall be able ter upset his plans. Now here he is tryin' ter gobble up ten thousand dollars in some way or other, an' marry some girl. I am th' friend o' the ladies, every time, an' if I don't put this Luella onter his haze it'll be 'cause I don't know nothin'. I don't know much, that I admit, but I am ready ter enter this race, that you kin set down fer fact."

"Yes, an' git killed, jest as like as not," muttered Skinny.

"Oh, no, my fat partner, not that. I have as many lives as a cat, and they haven't commenced to kill me yet. They have tried it purty often, but I am on deck as big as ever, an' better lookin' every time. They have hanged me, drowned me, buried me, pizened me, an' goodness only knows what they haven't done ter me, but I am th' same Billy. Now I will give 'em another chance ter try what they kin do."

"If you think there is anything wrong about it, you had better turn it over ter th' perlice, an' you come and tend ter business. If th' fever gits holt o' ye, ye won't be worth anything fer a month."

"Can't do it, Skinny. Th' fever has got me already, an' there is no help fer me now. I shall have ter go on, even if I git killed twice or three times in th' game. I should like ter respect yer wishes, noble youth, but it can't be did. You attend to business like a good boy, an' don't grieve after me. If I go under, promise me that you will come every springtime an' plant a sunflower on my breast, an' see that my grave is kept green. Dear Skinny, do you promise this?"

"You had better shut up an' stop yer foolin', fer it may turn out worse than ye think fer," Skinny admonished.

"Skinny, I hope you don't think that I am foolin', do ye?" Billy demanded, with an injured air. "You will find my will in—"

"You shut right up, now, or you an' me ain't partners no more," the thin partner ordered.

"You are allus jest so full o' talk, an' th' first thing you know you are in trouble. I am in no hurry ter put our place o' business in mournin', but it is sure ter come to it, if you go on at this rate."

Billy laughed. It was his delight to get his partner excited in this way, and he never lost an opportunity of doing so.

While they were thus talking they were making their way on toward Broadway, and now they came out upon that great thoroughfare.

The great stream of humanity, all hurry and bustle, was nothing to them, for they were used to it, and they passed right along, as freely as though they had the whole street to themselves.

They were still talking, when suddenly Billy felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

The wide-awake boy looked up quickly, and his net exclamation escaped in force:

"Sweet pertalers!"

This brought Skinny to an immediate stop too, and they both gazed in wonder at the stranger who had accosted them.

The person was an old man, having long and scraggy beard and hair, and the two boys had recognized him instantly as the original of the tin-type likeness they had just found in the letter!

"I take it you are a likely boy," the stranger observed, "and you seem to have an honest face."

"That is jest th' sort o' barnyard rooster I am, uncle," responded Billy.

The old man had to smile at this, and he went on to add:

"I'm a stranger in this big taoun, and I want to find my way to some good and honest tavern, where it won't cost a fortune to put up for a few days. Kin you show me to sich a place?"

CHAPTER V.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS.

BROADWAY BILLY'S reply was ready and quick.

"I reckon that I kin, mister," he assured.

"And will ye do it?" the old man further asked.

"Is there anything in it?" inquired Billy.

It was evident that the countryman did not get hold of the meaning of this at once, for his eyes wandered to his big valise, which he was holding fast to as though apprehensive that it would run away from him.

"In this, do you mean?" he mildly inquired, after a pause.

In the mean time, he was being pushed this way and that by the hurrying pedestrians, and seemed half bewildered.

Billy took hold of his arm, and drew him close to the wall of a building, where they were out of the main current of the human stream.

"No," he said, "I didn't mean yer valise. I meant ter ask if you was willin' ter put up fer th' service."

"Put up?" the old gentleman repeated; "that is what I want to find a tavern for. I want to put up—yes, to be sure I do."

Billy and Skinny had to laugh.

"I mean," Billy made plainer, "will you pay me fer th' job?"

"Oh! Ah, yes, to be sure."

"That settles it, then; I'm your buckleberry. Let me carry yer lugger, and I will pilot ye to a hotel in short order. One of th' right sort, too."

"Let you have my what, boy?"

"Yer lugger—yer valise, you know."

"Oh—ah, yes, I see. Well, yes, I don't care if I do let you carry it. You do not want to try to run off with it, howsumever, fur if you do it won't be well fur you. I am from the country, but I didn't come to the city to have any tricks played on me. I take a weekly newspaper, I do, and I am posted."

"Don't be afeerd o' my tryin' ter run off with it," reassured Billy, "fer I would as soon think o' runnin' off with a Sarrytogy trunk. I won't do any runnin' with it, I guess."

The old gentleman from the country laughed heartily.

"I told you I was posted," he bragged. "I have heerd tell of th' doin's of some of yer city gentlemen, how they take up a valise and walk right off with it sometimes, and I made up my mind that th' feller that walked away with mine would earn it. I have got half a dozen bricks in th' bottom of it."

Billy put down the valise, and looked at him in disgust.

"If that is th' case," he declared, "you will have ter carry it yerself, or pay double rate. Which is it ter be?"

The old gentleman saw that he had done it this time. He was not at a loss to get around the point however.

"What did you intend to charge me?" he asked.

"About a quarter," was the reply.

"Then you can carry it for that now, or I will carry it myself."

This was more than Billy had expected from such a customer. As for Skinny, he was highly tickled to see his partner thus caught in his own trap.

"Oh, well," said Billy, "we won't stop to bicker over that. Me an' my partner here will carry it atween us, an' then you kin pay him fer this work, an' me fer showin' ye to th' hotel. See?"

"Well, you are a sharp boy, and no mistake. How much do you want for your share of the work, then?"

"About another quarter, seeing that it is you. Come on, now, an' we'll soon have ye housed, Mister Gildersleeve."

"Stop!" the old man quickly ordered, laying his hand heavily upon the boy's shoulder; "how did you learn what my name is?"

His keen little eyes were flashing, and he was greatly excited.

"Why, I guessed at it," Billy answered; "did I hit it right th' first crack?"

"You can't play that game on me," was the hot return. "You put down that valise and get away from me as soon as you can!"

"What is biting you now?" Billy asked in surprise.

"Oh, you can't play the innocent with me," the old man cried, loud enough to attract attention, "fur I take a weekly newspaper, I do, and I am up to all your tricks. I haven't got no time ter step around th' corner to see you win a prize in a lottery to-day, nor nothin' of that kind. You just drop that valise, and be off, or I will call a policeman and have you locked up."

The old gentleman was highly in earnest, and it was an unpleasant fix for the boys to be in. If Skinny had not been in it, too, he would have had a good laugh at the expense of his partner, but as it was there was no room for him to do so.

"You are grubbin' up th' wrong stump this time, old man," declared Billy. "You are welcome ter call all th' perlice ye want ter. Ye will find that I am true blue, and warranted fast color and a yard wide. If you don't want me ter carry yer old valise, jest say so, an' our contract ends right here, an' no harm done."

Billy saw that he had made a mistake in letting out so soon that he knew the man's name. It could not be helped now, though, so he had to make the best of it. A crowd had collected around them in less time than it has taken us to write of it, and all were eager to know what was the trouble.

Just as Billy stopped speaking a policeman forced his way through the crowd, demanding:

"What is the trouble here?"

"This boy has been trying ter rope me in with a confidence game," the old gentleman excitedly explained, having the polished language of his weekly newspaper at the end of his tongue.

The policeman happened to be one of Billy's friends, and one with whom he was on solid terms.

"What! that boy tried to swindle you, old man?" the officer demanded; "you must be mistaken. I know that boy well, and there isn't a more square and upright lad in the whole city. There is certainly a great mistake here. How is it, Billy?"

"Why," explained Billy, "he stopped me a few minutes ago, and asked me ter show him ter some hotel. I agreed ter do so. Then I asked him if I shouldn't carry his lugger, an' he 'lowed that I could. He said he had six bricks in it, but I didn't go any on 'at story, though I told him that I would have ter raise th' price if I carried any extra cargo. Ye see he must 'a' forgot that he had let out his name, an' when I happened ter repeat it he thought I was tryin' ter play it on him. How in th' world could I know his name unless he did let it out?"

"That must be the way of it, old man," said the officer, "for I know these two boys well, and I can vouch for their honesty. You must have let your name out without thinking."

The old gentleman looked sheepish.

"Well, it may be so," he reflected, "but I was sure that I had not spoken my name once since I entered the city. You say the boy is to be trusted?"

"Yes, sir, you may trust him fully," the officer recommended. "Broadway Billy is not the boy to wrong any man."

"Well, if that is th' case, I am sorry that I suspected him. One has to be on his guard in this taoun, though."

"You are right there," agreed the officer, "and if you will follow the guidance of this boy, you will come out all right."

These words from such a source of authority restored the old gentleman's confidence, the crowd mingled with the passing throng, and Billy and Skinny took up the heavy valise and bore it away, its owner following them.

As they walked along Billy dropped the cue to his partner that he should take himself off as soon as they had arrived at the hotel, and leave him to deal with the old man and work up the case. That there was likely to be lively times ahead he now had no doubt.

Skinny agreed to the arrangement, and as soon as they came to their destination, he disappeared.

Billy led his customer on into the office of the house, and to the desk of the clerk, where he made his wishes quickly and briefly known.

The clerk was busily engaged in polishing up his diamond pin with the corner of a silk handkerchief, but he condescended to attend to the wants of the old gentleman, and when the latter had affixed his signature to the register, called a porter to show him to the room that had been assigned to his use.

"Now, Mister Gildersleeve," remarked Billy, as they turned away from the desk, "if you will allow me to go up with you, I think that I can tell you somethin' that will interest you."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just what I say; no more an' no less."

"But, what is it you know?"

"This ain't no place here to talk secrets," protested Billy, "and if you want ter know what it is that I know, you will have ter ask me up. That is th' long an' th' short o' that."

"But, boy, how am I to know what your purpose is?"

"By doin' what I said. You heerd what th' perliceman had ter say about me, an' if you want any further proof o' th' sort o' boss-fly I am, jest telephone up ter Headquarters an' ax 'em there. By th' way, don't let it git out of yer mind that ye haven't paid me yet."

"No, and I will pay you at once. There, now that account is settled. You are a strange boy, and I do not know what to make of you."

"Let us git right down to business," urged Billy. "I have somethin' of great importance ter tell you, an' th' sooner it is told, th' better. You know well enough that you didn't mention your name up th' street there, but that was

about th' only way that I had o' gettin' out of th' fix you put me in. Now how do you think I did learn it? I had never seen you in my life afore you stopped me there."

"Boy, I cannot understand you."

"In course you can't. It ain't ter be expected that ye kin. Mebby that if I go on an' tell ye a little more, however, you will see that I know somethin'. I reckon that th' business that brought you here was concernin' one Luella and a Mrs. Fauntleroy. Be I right?"

The face of the old gentleman was a study. He knew not what to make of this boy. How had he learned so much concerning him, when he had been scarcely half an hour in the city, and had not opened his mouth to a single person in regard to his business?

"Boy," he confessed, "you are too deep for me, old man as I am. Come up to my room, and we will have a talk."

Billy had won his point, and this was just what he wanted.

In the mean time the porter had been waiting, with the valise in hand, to lead the way, wondering, no doubt, what the old man could have in common with the boy. He now bade them follow him, and started up the broad stairway.

"Lead on, noble sir," said the irrepressible Billy, "and we will follow thee."

In a few minutes more Billy and the old gentleman were alone together in the room, and the door was closed.

CHAPTER VI.

MUCH MONEY AROUND.

WHEN Sidney Whiteclover sprung to his feet, showing such sudden alarm at the mention of the name of Broadway Billy, Prof. Appletree looked at him in amazement.

"Do you know the boy?" he asked.

"Yes, confound him!" was the retort, "I know more than I like about him. He is the boy that helped to spoil a piece of work my friend Bob had a hand in, and got him sent up the river. He is too smart by far, and if he has got hold of that letter there is likely to be trouble."

"He is the boy detective I have heard you speak about?"

"Yes, he is the one. And I would rather have a regular detective after me, any day. To read of some of the adventures of that boy is more like reading romance than every-day truth. He has done clever work, and no mistake. If he puts his nose into my business, though, it will cut his career short, and that he can depend on."

"You must take care not to do anything that would get you into trouble," the old man cautioned.

"No, I don't intend to, for I shall take good care to keep out of trouble. At the same time, though, if that boy gets in my way he will turn up among the mi sing."

"Be careful, Sidney, be careful."

"Yes, yes, I will be careful. It may be that he has not found the letter, in which case I am perfectly safe. If he has, however, then I must look out for breakers ahead. I will drop around and see him this evening, I think."

"And where are you going now?"

"I shall go up and see Mrs. Fauntleroy."

"That is what I was about to advise you to do. You must not lose sight of the end where the money is."

"No, you may depend on me for that. Well, so-long till I see you again. You may not hear from me in some time."

"Good-by, Sidney; and do not forget that I must have money or our machine cannot be completed."

"You shall have it."

The young man shook hands with his uncle and made his way down-stairs, opened the hall door and passed out, closing it after him with a bang.

"Just my infernal luck," he growled under his breath as he walked away. "If that letter had not been of any importance, it would have stuck to me like a plaster. It is gone, though, and I must make the best of it. I hope that it is where it will never be found."

Cherishing this small ray of consolation, he made his way as quickly as possible to the nearest station of the Elevated Railroad, and there boarded a train for up-town.

All the way to the station where he intended to get out he sat in a deep study, with a frown upon his face that boded no good for the object of his thoughts, evidently.

When he again reached the street he walked away at a lively pace, and was in a short time at his destination.

Mrs. Fauntleroy was a widow, and with her

daughter and niece occupied a neat house in a respectable quarter of the town.

Sidney Whiteclover was shown into the parlor immediately, and in a very short time Mrs. Fauntleroy appeared.

"My dear Mr. Whiteclover, I am glad to see you," she exclaimed. "I suppose you received my letter, did you not?"

"Yes, I received it," the young man answered in anything but an angelic mood, "and it is that which brings me here."

The woman saw that something was wrong, and hastened to inquire:

"What has happened? Your manner alarms me."

"Whatever has happened, it is your fault," was the non-reassuring response.

The woman paled.

"What do you mean?" she gasped. "I fail to understand you. I sent the letter by special post, thus making sure that it would reach you all right."

"Oh, it reached me all right, but that has nothing to do with it. I have lost it."

"Lost it! that is bad. But, that is your fault, and I do not see how you can say it is mine. I do not understand you at all."

The woman was beginning to show some spirit in the matter now.

"What I mean is just this," the young man explained; "you made a great and serious mistake when you wrote everything so plainly. What did you make use of real names for? If that letter happens to be found by any one so disposed, that one can make a good deal of trouble for us."

"You ought to have thought of that and taken better care of the letter, then," retorted the woman, bitterly. "On my part I made sure that it reached you all right, supposing, of course, that you would know how to take care of it. If you did not, that is something that I cannot help and am not responsible for."

"Well, do not let us have any words about it, Mrs. Fauntleroy. You must know that the loss of it has made me not a little out of temper. Let us discuss what is to be done to repair the damage as far as we can."

"Yes, I can see that it was calculated to make you lose patience a little, but that is hardly sufficient reason for your putting all the blame on me," was the return. "As you say, however, we will let it drop. Did you take a look at the likeness of old Gildersleeve, so as to be able to recognize him when you see him?"

"Yes, that part of it is all right."

"Then you may as well go ahead with the matter. The chances are that you will find the letter in some place where you have laid it, or that it will never be heard of again. We shall have to take the risk in that direction."

"Yes, but it is bad that the photograph is gone too. I could not place a man at the ferry, as you suggested. I shall have to try some other plan to find him."

"And that will not be easy. Still, by calling at the different hotels you ought to be able to get hold of him, for of course he must be here now and will stop at one of them."

"That is what I shall have to do, and when found—then what?"

"That is your business. You must take care that he does not learn where I am, and that he does not see the girl. It makes no difference to me how you do it, so long as you make sure work of it."

There was a hard and wicked meaning in the woman's tone.

"You will suggest nothing, then?" the young man asked.

"No, nothing, unless it is that you do your best to get him started for home again as soon as you can. You must do it your own way. If you keep in mind what you have at stake, I am sure you will do your work well."

"I suppose your interest in it is not so great," Whiteclover hinted.

"What my interest in it is need not trouble you," was the freezing retort. "I have made you an offer, and it is to your interest to win the prizes if you can. If you can marry my niece within six months, you may have her, and I will give you ten thousand dollars besides. Outside of that you need know nothing of my plans."

"Very well, I shall not trouble myself about them further, madam. But, by the way, are you aware that your niece has another lover, and one who is likely to prove a serious obstacle in my way?"

"You refer to Albert Tierson?"

"The same."

"Yes, I am aware that they are on very friendly terms, but I have forbid her having

anything more to do with him. If you can put an effectual block to that, too, so much the better."

"I will take care of all of them," the young man avowed, hotly. "I did not go into this thing to be defeated. I will take care of them all."

"I am glad to see you so determined. You are sure to win if you put your mind to it. Is there anything else you had to speak about?"

"No, and I will go. I must take time by the forelock in these matters—in one direction, at any rate—so I will bid you good-afternoon."

They parted on friendly terms, and Whiteclover was soon on his way down-town again, while Mrs. Fauntleroy, reclining upon an easy-chair in her parlor, reflected on the short interview.

"How stupid of him to lose that letter," she mused. "I could have choked him for it. But, it may all turn out well. I see he is getting interested to know what my part in the matter is to be—that is, where my interest comes in, that I can afford to pay him so large a sum to get the girl off my hands. That he shall not know, so there is no use his hinting around to find out. He knows all that it is necessary he should know."

There came just then a ring at the bell.

"Who can that be?" the woman questioned, as she waited for the coming of the servant to announce.

She had not long to wait, for the servant soon appeared.

"Mr. Jasper Treetop, ma'm," said the girl.

Mrs. Fauntleroy looked relieved, even pleased. "Show him right in," she ordered.

In a moment more Mr. Treetop made his appearance.

He was a short man, about fifty years of age, and as completely bald as though he had never had a spear of hair upon his shining head in his life. He was well dressed, and sported a heavy cane with a gold head, and a massive gold fob-chain.

Mrs. Fauntleroy rose, and advanced to meet him with extended hand.

"My dear, good Treetop," she gushed, "I am more than pleased to see you. I hope that you are the bearer of good news."

Mr. Treetop took the extended hand in both of his and shook it heartily, and responded:

"The pleasure is mutual; and as for good news, that I have in abundance."

"Good! Now sit right down, and I am ready to be entertained with your story," and she led the little man to a seat and deposited him upon it.

"Well, in the first place, according to your wishes, I have secured the interest on the fortune for this year and next."

"Splendid!"

"And here is your share, after having deducted my per cent., and the extra sum promised for the service. I thought it best to take out those amounts, and have yours all in one package, so that there would be no trouble in case you happened to have company."

"Perfectly right, my dear Treetop, perfectly right. What discount did the banker require?"

"Nothing for this year's interest, as that was so nearly due; but for the advance of next year's he demanded one per cent. Of course I paid it."

"Quite right. Snedecker is a hard man, and we are fortunate to come off so well as that. I am satisfied. The interest on nearly two hundred thousand dollars is no trifling sum, and I can well spare the discounts."

"Yes, I should say you could."

Mrs. Fauntleroy rose and put the money away in a safe place, and then she returned to her place and settled down for a quiet confab with her caller. It will be to our interest to know what they said.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GRAND MOTIVE REVEALED.

"Now, Mrs. Fauntleroy," said Treetop, when she had returned to her place, "you have something to tell me, I suppose. You intimated in your note that you had news for me. Is there a prospect of the girl's speedy marriage?"

"Of that I can hardly assure, one way or the other," the woman made answer. "I think, however, that the prospect is fair. I have made the acquaintance of a young man since I saw you last, and having found out his character I have made him a promise of ten thousand dollars if he will win the girl and marry her within six months. He is good-looking, and dresses well, but that is all that can be said for him. His name is Sidney Whiteclover. But I do not

rely on that so much as on another point in the game."

"You are a sharp one, my dear Hannah."

"You flatter me, Mr. Treetop. But, let me get on with my story. The girl is in love with another young man, one Albert Tierson, and by urging her to marry this man Whiteclover, and forbidding her to have anything to do with the other, as I have done, she may become desperate and run off and marry Tierson to escape further persecution."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Treetop, "you are a deep one, and no mistake. Of course we do not care *who* she marries, so long as she does marry before her next birthday."

"That is it exactly, my dear Treetop, and then we are safe. But, there is now another danger to confront us, and it is of that that I hinted in my note. Old Stanton Gildersleeve has come to the city."

The little man grew nervous and rubbed his bald pate desperately.

"That is bad," he muttered, "deuced bad. What are you going to do about that?"

"Well, I have taken steps to have him misled in his search for us, and to have him turned face-about for home as speedily as possible. You must not let him find you, Treetop, or he will give you trouble."

"Oh, he shall not find me, rest assured of that. I shall not go back to my old boarding-house for a week, now that you have warned me, and if he finds that, he won't find me there, nor can they tell him where I am. I am glad you warned me; I will put up at a hotel."

"If we can only overcome these two obstacles," the woman observed, "we shall be sure of the money. Let us get clear of old Gildersleeve and make sure of the marriage of the girl, and we are safe. If the old man comes here he will find me 'not at home.'"

This was about all of their talk that concerns us immediately, so we will not record all that followed. Treetop remained an hour or more, and then took his leave, the parting being as warm and friendly as the meeting had been.

As soon as he was gone, however, a meaning smile spread over the woman's face, and she muttered:

"The little, bald-headed donkey, he cannot see an inch away from his nose. I marry *him*? Never! I will make use of him, though, until that fortune is safe in my hand, and then I will find some way of disposing of him."

At this moment a young lady entered the room. It was Mrs. Fauntleroy's charming daughter, Bermuda.

She was a pretty girl, tall and queenly in appearance, but haughty and severe in manner. Her name was certainly an odd one, and how it ever came to be here we shall not stop to inquire.

"Who was your caller, mamma?" she asked.

"It was Mr. Treetop," the mother replied.

"The old granny! What did he want?"

"What did he want? You are not aware, my daughter, that I am his promised wife. Such is the fact, and you may as well know it now as any time."

The young lady could not believe that she had heard aright. Could such a thing be possible? The blank look upon her face caused her mother to laugh heartily.

"That was rather a poor joke for you," the daughter said, now smiling, thinking that as such the remark had been intended.

"But, it is no joke," the mother assured, recovering her earnest expression with an effort. "I am truly engaged to be married to Mr. Jasper Treetop."

"I will not believe it."

"Whether you believe it or not, it is the truth."

The young lady dropped upon a chair as limp as a rag.

"What in the world are you thinking about, mother?" she demanded.

"What should a promised bride naturally be thinking about? I know you will be just delighted to call him pa, when once you get used to him in that relationship. He is a grand little man; a trifle bald, I will admit, but—"

"A trifle bald!" cried Bermuda; "his head is as bare as any other head of cabbage. I would be ashamed to be seen out in his company, and if you marry him—"

Mrs. Fauntleroy interrupted with another burst of laughter.

"What do you mean?" her daughter asked, as soon as she could get the words in. "You seem to be in a very jocular humor this afternoon."

"You make me laugh," her mother declared. "I never saw such a look of disgust upon your pretty face before in my life, and it is really

amusing. Now I will explain the whole matter to you, in order that you may know that I am in my right mind."

"Pray do so, for you have almost led me to think that you must be sadly away from home in the upper story."

"While it is true that I am engaged— There, do not faint, but hear me out. While it is true that I am engaged to marry our dear little bald Treetop, I have no intention whatever of doing so."

"You speak in riddles."

"No doubt it appears so, but now I will try to make it all plain for you. In order that you may understand it fully, I must go back to the time when you were a little child, and your cousin Luella first came to live with us."

"You have often promised to tell me more about her."

"You shall hear the whole story now. When you were a little girl of six, your cousin Luella was left an orphan. Her father was my brother, as of course you know. He was worth about two hundred thousand dollars. He appointed three guardians to take care of the child and her fortune, and I was one of the three. She was to make her home with me. The other two were Jasper Treetop and Stanton Gildersleeve. My brother's will was rather a strange one. All of his wealth was to go to Luella when she became twenty-one years old, provided she remained single until that time. In the event of her death or marriage, the wealth was to come to me and my heirs. Do you begin to see into it?"

"No, not clearly. It is strange Luella has never spoken of her expectations."

"She does not know anything about it. There is just where the great beauty of the scheme comes in. Now, Stanton Gildersleeve is an honest man, too honest to suit me, and he is in my way—or may be. Jasper Treetop is not so virtuous, and of him I am making a tool. I, too, was a widow at that time, and so master of my own doings. I had all the interest of that money to use until Luella came of age, out of which I was to provide liberally for her, and of course I was far removed from want. I saw a plan by which I might get the whole of the fortune for myself and you. If I could move away from our native place, where no one could find me, and remain in hiding until Luella had grown up and married—with my help, of course—then all the fortune would come to me. Little by little I led Treetop on in the scheme, and at last he entered into it with me. He looks forward to marrying me as soon as I get hold of the money. In the mean time I am keeping him on a string, as the saying is."

"My! what a plotter you are! I did not think it was in you. But, go right on with the scheme, mother mine, for I shall not hinder you in any way. I do not love Luella any too well, as you know, though under your directions I have had to treat her well; and it will be a pleasure to see her left in the way you intend."

"Yes, we have always treated her well, and we must now treat her better than ever, until she is married. You know I am leading her on to marry that man Whiteclover, which I am in doubt of her doing, but if I can drive her to marry any one else it will be just the same, or even better. You see it is a grand plot, and there is no reason why it should not work if it is managed properly."

"But what of the other man—Gildersleeve?"

"Well, he is in search of us now, as I have learned from a trusted friend, but I am taking steps to throw him off the track. There is little danger that we shall not win. Everything is in our favor."

"But, how about this vast fortune? Can it not be withheld, in case there is any suspicion forthcoming?"

"No, I do not look for anything of that kind. You see two of the guardians agreeing upon any point in the matter, were to rule, and I and Treetop have always ruled Gildersleeve out in the cold."

"How do you manage it all, though?"

"It is hardly worth while to go into the detail of the matter, my dear, and explain all the minor points. Treetop has been a lawyer, you know, and he knows all the tricks that are worth knowing. He has managed it all right thus far, and there is no fear for the future."

"You say he has been a lawyer?"

"Yes; I thought you knew it."

"Then is there not every reason why you should not keep your eye upon him in a pretty close way?"

"Yes; but do not let that alarm you. He can do nothing without my signature, and he dare not fall into the hands of Gildersleeve. I am

sharp enough for him. But, I think there is nothing to fear, for he loves me desperately, and I pretend to love him in the same ardent fashion. Little fear of his trying anything of the sort, though he may."

"But, how will you shake him off finally?"

"That I have not decided, but with plenty of money it will not be a hard matter to remove him, I think."

"No, perhaps not."

"You see, I— But, some one is coming, and I think it must be your cousin. Be sure you do not let her surmise anything of this."

"I shall take care."

The door opened and another pretty young lady entered the room. She was, apparently, not more than eighteen years of age, though in truth she was nearly twenty-one. This was Luella Norseman, the orphan who was the victim of the plot we have seen disclosed. Her beauty was of a different order from that of Bermuda Fauntleroy, and had a greater charm. She, too, was queenly, if that by any means expresses what we mean, but instead of a haughty manner hers was thoroughly mild and unassuming.

"You little rogue!" cried Bermuda, bounding forward and throwing her arms around her, kissing her most affectionately, "where have you been romping off to all the afternoon?"

Luella returned the embrace and the kisses, but not without a little show of surprise at this unusual burst of affection, and responded:

"Why, you know that I have been over to visit Mrs. Hastings and her daughters. I asked you to go with me, as you must remember."

"So you did," Bermuda acknowledged, "and how forgetful I am. I had quite forgotten where you were, as I was just telling mamma."

"Indeed yes," chimed in Mrs. Fauntleroy, "and we were wondering where you could be. You had better prepare for tea now my dear, for it will soon be ready."

There were but three persons present in the room, but there were more faces than three there, as we have plainly shown.

CHAPTER VIII.

BILLY AND GILDERSLEEVE.

BROADWAY BILLY, as soon as he and Mr. Gildersleeve were alone together in the room of the hotel, drew up a chair and invited the old gentleman to be seated.

To an observer it would have looked as though the boy was the proprietor of the room, and the old gentleman his caller. If there was any thing that Billy lacked, it certainly was not assurance, or "nerve."

The old gentleman sat down as asked, and Billy having already done so, the latter opened the conversation.

"Now, Mr. Gildersleeve," he observed, "I am a boy that don't profess ter know much, but th' little that I do know I know as well as anybody. Do you grip outer them facts?"

"I understand what you say," was the old gentleman's response, "and now I am ready to hear your story. You must bear in mind, however, that I am in no mood for any foolishness."

"That is understood, uncle, and if you ketch me talkin' any foolishness you jest dust my coat-tails with th' toe of yer boot. Now are you aware that by comin' ter Gotham-town you have run right inter th' risk of yer life?"

"Where is Gotham-town? and what do you mean by the risk of my life?"

"This is Gotham, uncle, though we call it New York fer short; an' there is some p'izen critters here that is waitin' fer ye ter put ye out of th' way."

"How do you know that?"

Now that he was off the street and out of the bustle and excitement, the old gentleman showed that he did not lack native shrewdness.

"By th' same token that I knowed you when I sot my optics outer ye fer th' first time up th' street there, the boy replied. "If I am not mistaken, you kem ter New York ter find a certain Mrs. Fauntleroy, and a young lady named Luella."

"Well, if you think that, my boy, hold to the opinion. Go right on and tell me all you have to tell."

"All right, uncle, jest as you say, so long as it don't make any great difference ter me. Now this Mrs. Fauntleroy has writ a letter ter a sartin feller in this town who hasn't any too good a reputation, givin' him th' p'int in th' case, and tellin' him ter see that you don't find out where she lives. Then she goes on ter say that you mustn't meet th' gal Luella, not under any circumstances. If you see her, she says, th' game they are figgerin' on is gone up. She tells

him that he must see to it that your stay in New York is short, an' that means a heap when it is said ter sich a feller as Whiteclover is. She tells him that if he kin git rid of you, an' will marry th' girl in six months, she will give him ten thousand dollars. Now that is th' sort of a blushin' primrose yer Mrs. Fauntleroy is."

The old gentleman's eyes were sticking out like the eyes of a crab. He was for the moment too surprised to speak. How in the name of wonders had this boy learned so much?

"What you have told me," he presently said, "surprises me beyond measure. It is as I feared, only a great deal worse. I had no idea that there was so much villainy in her. Now I wonder if Jasper Treetop is in it too?"

Here was a new name for Billy to store away in his busy brain.

"Who is he?" he immediately asked. "Is he the friend of Mrs. Fauntleroy's that wrote to her that you had started to th' city?"

The old man got up and paced the floor.

"No," he replied, "I must have another enemy right there at home, and I think I can guess who it is. Treetop has not been seen there for years, and it must be his son. He claims that he does not know where his father is, but I have had my suspicions that he did, and now this goes to prove it. Oh, just let me get hold of them, and if I don't make it interesting for them it will be queer."

"You want ter look out that they don't git holt o' you first, though!" Billy cautioned. "You are not used to th' city, and they are sharp enough ter do you up in about no time. Most of you fellers from th' country thinks you are so smart that you can't be taken in, but that is jest where ye make yer great mistake. Now, if you take my advice, you will put yer case inter th' hands of some able detective, an' you jest keep back out of sight."

"But, I do not know any detective."

"Well, I do, then, and if you want one, I will send one to ye that will jerk th' stuffin' out of this little game in about no time. What d'ye say?"

"I think that I had better see a perliceman."

"There, now, that is jest where you make another grand mistake. You think ther perlice is everything, you folks that comes from th' country, but they ain't. They are good in their place, and I ain't sayin' but they have some lightnin' smart detectives on th' force; but what you want is a private detective, one that is ter be trusted, and jest let him take th' business right out of yer hands."

"If it hadn't been for what that perliceman said about you, I wouldn't have you here in my room now, and yet you try to run 'em down."

"Nothin' of th' kind!" Billy resented. "I say they are good in their place, an' so they are; but they ain't what you want now. An', as fer my bein' here jest on 'count o' that one, you know that you wouldn't have let me out of yer sight till you had heard what I had ter say, after I had mentioned that woman's name ter ye. Now ain't I right?"

Billy was wise for his years in human nature, and he had bit this nail right on the head. The old gentleman could not get around it.

"You are certainly right," the old man confessed, "for my interest was intense and my curiosity great. Now, I would like for you to tell me how it was that you gained so much information, and how you were enabled to recognize me when I stopped you up the street there. I am as much in the dark as ever."

"I might tell you that a little bird told me," said Billy, "but there is no reason why I should not give ye the whole truth, an' nothin' but th' truth."

Billy went ahead then and told the whole story, holding back nothing. He saw that it was necessary to put the old gentleman completely on his guard, and to do that he would have to win his confidence in himself.

When he had done, the old guardian observed:

"Boy, I see no reason why your story should not be true, and I believe you. I can see, too, that you are a boy of large experience for one of your years. Now, what is your advice under such circumstances?"

"I am glad ter see that you are willin' ter listen ter me in that line," the boy returned. "Now, what I advise is this: In th' first place, you want to keep close to yer room, and ye don't want ter let any sort of decoy draw ye out inter th' town. They will find out where ye are, no doubt, but they can't do ye any harm while ye are in this house. If they once git ye outside, though, it is good-by ter ye."

"I will stay within."

"That shows sense. You will pardon me fer sich plain talk, fer you are old an' I am only a

boy, but I am posted here, an' you ain't. That makes a difference. Then, in th' next place, you want a detective. I will send one to ye either to-night or in th' mornin', an' you kin tell him th' hull tale."

"What will his name be?"

"His name is Speare—Detective Speare. He is one of th' best in this town. I know a good many of 'em, and he ain't no slouch. Now as that is about all that I have ter tell, will ye allow me ter ask a question or two?"

"Yes, as many as you like."

It was plain to be seen that Billy had won the old gentleman over.

"Well, I would like ter know more about this case. Who is this Miss Luella? an' why do they want her ter marry Whiteclover?"

Mr. Gildersleeve began and told him the whole story, thus making the matter plain. Billy listened with close attention, and when the old gentleman came to the end of his story, exclaimed:

"Sweet pertaters! didn't I know there was a p'izen difficulty o' some sort a-brewin'? Didn't I smell th' 'pearance of a colored gentleman in the wood-pile? Now you kin bet th' best dollar that you have got in yer pocket that we are goin' ter put th' stop ter this purty game, an' that is a dead sure thing. When they git William O' Broadway after 'em, they will wish they hadn't done so; an' that same William aforesaid is me."

"Now, is that about all we have ter say?"

"I can think of nothing more, my boy."

"Then I will take myself away. I will set this ball ter rollin' at once, fer th' sooner we move th' better, you know."

"Yes, to be sure. What do you intend doing first?"

"I think I'll hunt 'round fer that detective th' first thing, an' then I will take a walk up 'round th' place where this Mrs. Corduroy lives an' see if I kin git a chance ter whisper a word inter th' ear of th' onhappy orphing."

"Well, just as you will. Little did I think when I came here that the affair would take this turn, and that I would be taking advice from a boy of your years. As it is, however, I am well satisfied. The hand of Providence seems to be in it. Now you must take care not fall into any danger."

"I'll try not ter, but th' chances is I won't succeed. If I fall in though, I'll have ter fall out again, as I have done afore. Well, there bein' no more business before us, I'll go. Adieu till I see you again."

With that closing remark, Billy left the room, and was soon out on the street once more.

"Well, I'll be jiggered," he muttered to himself as he walked away, "there is somethin' bound ter turn up once in a while, jest as sure as once in a while comes around. Now, who would ha' thought when me an' Skinny set out this mornin' that there was a detective case comin' out of it? It seems ter me that I am bound ter be stirrin' up diffikilties wherever I go. It seems ter be my lot, an' I can't help it any more'n I kin help eatin'. Can't say as I want ter help it any more, either. I am never so happy as when I am in a b'ilin' pot o' mystery."

Going on in this strain he made his way straight to the corner stand. There he found his thin partner as full of business as ever.

"Hello, Fatty," he exclaimed. "I see you are hard at it."

"Is that you, Billy?" was the response; "I am glad ter see you back. I hope you have got th' fever broke, an' are ready ter 'tend ter business."

"Broke?" Billy exclaimed; "why, partner, it is jest ragin' at its hight. I'm inter a case clear up ter my ears, an' I thought I would come 'round and tell ye not to worry after me if I don't show up in a day or two. That letter you found was th' starter of one of the biggest cases that I have had in some time. There is no knowin' where it will end, but my vote is on th' side o' honor, truth, justice, and so forth, as usual. You tend ter business till you see me again, my partner, an' I'll reward ye accordin' ter yer works."

"Yes, an' you'll keep on till you git put out of th' way, an' that will be th' last of ye."

"Funny if it wouldn't, partner, an' that is a fact. But, you don't want ter let sich idees git a hold onter yer mind. You know I have nine lives, an' they haven't got one of 'em yet. You keep yer eye on my career, my lad, an' one of these days you will see me fill th' chair now held down by Inspector Br— Hello! Sweet pertaters! Here is a state of things, Skinny, sure as ye live. Here comes Sidney Whiteclover, bearin' down upon us with all sail set. Now you hold your peace, my partner, an' I will do the talkin' fer both of us."

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER PLOT RIPENING.

WHITECLOVER came right on to the stand, and there stopped.

"Are you Broadway Billy?" he inquired.

"That is th' way that I sign myself when I stop at th' Brunswick," the boy responded promptly.

"Then you are the boy I want to see."

"Well, here I be, an' you are welcome ter look at me to yer heart's content. I am not insensible to th' honor, I assure you."

"Oh, I didn't want to see you only, but I want to have a little talk with you. Do you know who I am?"

"Want ter talk, too, eh? Well, that won't cost any more. Yes, I ruther think I know ye."

"Who am I?"

"You are Sidney Whiteclover, unless I am a heap mistaken."

"You are right. Now I have come here to ask you to hand over that letter that you found in the house of Professor Appletree this afternoon."

Skinny gave a little start, but turned at once to wait on a customer who at that moment came up, and so escaped notice. Billy, however, took it with perfect coolness, and responded:

"Guess you have got yer line fast ter th' wrong dock this time, Mister Cloverwhite—I mean Whiteclover. I hain't found no letter."

"Don't you lie to me, you young whelp."

"That kind o' talk means pistols at twenty paces over on th' shore at Weeshawken at sunrise," was the retort.

"Then you mean to say that you have not found any letter belonging to me?"

"That is what I did say, an' you have got it as straight as a string."

Billy was quite equal to the emergency. He knew well that Whiteclover was trying to bluff him into a confession of having found such a letter, if he had found it, with no proof whatever to back up his claim. Billy had lived too long to be caught that way.

It was lucky for the boy that he was thus prepared, too, for Whiteclover did not mean to take one "no" for answer.

"You know you are lying to me," he declared, "for the old man said you did pick up such a letter when you were there."

This was so pointed that Billy thought perhaps there was something in it. He did not surrender, though, but proved that Jack was as good as his master at the game.

"That won't work," he retorted. "If sich was th' case, it ain't likely that he would let me walk away with the letter an' not say anything about it. I didn't find yer letter, an' that is all there is about it."

Billy was telling the truth, for it was not he who had found it.

"Perhaps it was your skeleton partner here that found it, then," the man persisted.

"We kin soon settle that question," said Billy, and turning to Skinny he demanded:

"Hey, Skinny, you baint got no letter that don't belong to ye that ye found in th' house of old Appletree, have ye? In course ye haint."

"Narry a letter," Skinny assured. "You are welcome ter search me if ye don't want ter take my word fer it," he added.

The very way in which Billy had put the question had given Skinny the cue as to what he should answer. And he, too, had told the truth, for he had given the letter over to Billy.

Whiteclover saw that there was nothing to be made there. Either the boys had not seen his letter, or else they were wonderfully sharp. He could not decide which it was, but was inclined to believe they had not found it.

"Well, there is something strange about it," he mused, and he took a step away. "If you haven't got it, you haven't, [and the old man must have been mistaken.]

"There ain't no mistake about it at all," Billy now declared, seeing that it had been a game of bluff. "You are either bluffing, or the old man has lied to ye. That is th' long an' th' short of it. It is mighty certain that he didn't see either one of us pick up a letter."

"Well, well, no harm done," Whiteclover pacified as he turned away, "so we will let it drop. Sorry to have troubled you, but you see there was a mistake."

"Yes, so it seems, an' a big one, too."

The man went away, and Billy turned to Skinny with a grin.

"You see he didn't make anything out o' me," he laughed. "They have got ter git up early ter git th' best of yer partner, Skinny, even if I do say it myself. He must take me fer a flat of th' first water."

"You have got nerve, and no mistake," Skinny had to admit; "but they do git th' best of ye once in a while, and bad, too. You want ter be on th' watch fer 'em in this game, or you will git done up. You have got out of so many bad fixes, that they will be likely ter make double sure of ye th' next time."

"That is about what I think myself, partner, but it is some satisfaction ter know that I can't die but once. Now I will be off, fer there is work ahead. You keep things straight here, as I said, and you might send word around ter my old mammy where I am, so's she won't worry herself inter th' 'sylum."

Several more remarks were exchanged, and then the bootblack bravo went away in quest of Detective Speare.

Fortunately he found that gentleman in his office.

"Hello, Billy," the detective exclaimed, "what brings you around here? Can I do anything for you?"

Billy and Speare were good friends, and as the boy had once saved his life, the detective was devoted to him in no ordinary way.

"Tis business brings me here, great sachem," Billy responded. "As fer your doin' anything fer me, I reckon ye kin."

"Very well, tell me your story, and I shall be only too glad to be of assistance to you. Is it anything in my line of business?"

"That is what it is, illustrious chief, and no mistake either. I have got hold of th' business end of one of th' biggest things you ever heard of, and there promises to be fun ahead fer somebody."

"Just like you, to be scaring up game. As to the fun ahead, however, you want to take good care that they don't make mincemeat of you. If you fall into the hands of any of your old enemies it will be all up with you. But, what is the case?"

"Do you know Sir Stanton Gildersleeve?" asked Billy, in all earnestness, though of course he knew that the detective did not.

"No," was the answer; "who was he?"

"Didn't hardly think ye did. He is a young man from th' country, an' not so very young either. But lend me yer ears, and list ter th' tale that I will onwind ter ye."

Billy went ahead then, and told the detective all about the case, and wound up by telling him to go and see the old gentleman as soon as he could, and make his mind easy.

"We will go up there at once," Speare proposed. "You can then introduce me, and I will see what I can do for your old friend. You seem to tumble into more mysteries than any other boy of your age and size that I ever heard of."

"Yes, I do seem ter git a fair share of 'em, that is a fact. Well, come on, and I will pilot ye up ter his roost, an' then ye kin let him entertain ye, while I go on and seek an interview with Miss Luella."

"What, you intend to risk going up there to see her?"

"Jest so."

"There is danger in that quarter for you, now that Whiteclover has his eyes on you."

"Can't help that. There is danger fer Miss Luella, too, and I must give her th' inside history of this purty skeem, so's she kin be on her guard."

"Yes, you are right, but at the same time you must be more than careful."

"I shall try ter, you bet."

Thus they talked over the case as they walked along, and in due time arrived at the hotel.

Billy conducted the detective to the room occupied by the old gentleman, and there left him, after introducing him.

As we have heard the story once, we will not stop to overhear the interview between Mr. Gildersleeve and the detective, but will follow Broadway Billy and learn what happened him.

By this time it was almost night. Up to that hour the boy had had no thought of being hungry, but on passing a restaurant the smell of inviting viands greeted him and he stopped short.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, "that makes me think that I had orter be hungry by this time. I wonder if I am? Let me see. Yes, hungry as a bear, when I come to think of it, an' I guess I will drop right in here and fill up."

Without further question or debate he entered the place, and was soon seated at one of its many tables.

While he was waiting he looked around at the others who were there, and, much to his surprise he discovered, just ahead of him, Sidney Whiteclover! The man had his back turned toward him, and was busily engaged in conversation with another man who was sitting with him.

It took the boy but an instant to change his place and take a seat on the opposite side of the table, thus bringing himself back to back with the others.

His idea was to get near enough to overhear what was said if he could.

The man who was with Whiteclover was a stranger to him, but he set him down at once as one of the same ilk. He could not see his face, it is true, but Billy was a boy who could tell those he knew without the necessity of a full face view in every instance.

At first he could not overhear anything that was said, and the coming of a waiter interrupted him still further. After he had given his order, and had been supplied with what he wanted, he was enabled to pay closer attention.

"That is the trouble," were the first words he caught, and they were spoken by Whiteclover; "the girl is not likely to have me by fair means, and I shall have to force her. That is where I want your help, you see."

Billy did not get what was said in return.

"Yes," Whiteclover next spoke, "that fellow Tierson is in the way, and the girl loves him. There is no question about that part of it."

Again Billy missed the response.

"Well," Whiteclover rejoined, "I do not want to go to the trouble of removing him unless I am forced to do so. You see we can steal the girl, force her to marry me, and then he can whistle. The main thing is for me to get the girl."

"Well, what is your plan?" the other man asked, now speaking a little louder.

"This is hardly the place to discuss that," said Whiteclover. "As soon as we are through we will go down to Barney Linn's and there we will talk it all over and lay the plans. There is a big thing at stake, and we can't be too careful."

"Right you are, so we will let it drop. Here, take some more of the wine."

Broadway Billy finished his supper in haste, and quietly took his departure. Here was another plot that promised fruit, and he must take steps toward gathering some of the harvest when it ripened.

CHAPTER X.

MISS NORSEMAN WARNED.

In leaving the restaurant it had been Billy's intention to go at once to the place kept by Barney Linn, which was a saloon of a rather questionable character, in a quarter of the town that was equally as questionable. It was a place that was patronized a great deal by men and women who had a passion for sporting.

Billy knew the place well, having had business there more than once, and was well aware that its reputation was none too savory.

He had started in that direction, and had gone quite a little distance, when he came to a sudden halt.

"Let's reason this thing a little," he reflected. "If I go on ter Barney's now, what will be the result? Th' fellers won't be there fer half an hour yet, it ain't likely, ter judge by th' slow rate they was puttin' away their grub, an' that time will all be wasted. That would be almost enough time fer me ter go up an' interview that young lady."

He stood still and gave his thoughts full play.

"That is what I will do," he decided. "I will go up an' have a hasty interview with th' gal, if I kin git ter see her, an' after that I will return and see what I can do with th' rascals. It is mighty 'portant that she should know what is goin' on, so's ter be on th' lookout fer danger, an' it looks as though it was my place ter post her. I guess I kin frame some story or other that will git me inter th' house. In this sort o' work, where it is necessary ter keep swords crossed with villainy all th' time, th' truth kin be stretched a little without doin' any harm, I reckon. It sometimes has ter be, anyhow."

Having settled in his mind what to do, the boy lost no time in putting his plan into execution.

Going to the nearest station of the Elevated, he boarded a train, and was soon in the neighborhood of the house he desired to visit.

It will be remembered that the address of Mrs. Fauntleroy was on the letter that had been found by Skinny, and it was by this that the young detective was guided.

When he came to the right house he sprang up the steps and boldly rung the bell.

A servant opened the door, and he asked to see Miss Luella Norseman. He had got the young lady's full name from Mr. Gildersleeve.

"Wait, an' I'll see if she is at home," the ser-

vant said, and she disappeared, going direct to Mrs. Fauntleroy.

"It is a boy, you say?" that lady inquired.

"Yes, 'm."

"Show him right in here, and I will learn what he wants."

This little incident serves to show that Luella was under watch, and that it was not intended to let any one see her who might possibly warn her of the plot that was being hatched.

The servant returned to the door, and invited Billy to enter, and led him to the room where Mrs. Fauntleroy was waiting.

The moment the door opened the boy knew that he was not in the presence of the person he desired to see.

"This is old Fauntleroy herself," he quickly thought, "but if she gits ahead of William O' Broadway she has got ter git right up an' hump herself, an' no mistake. I have had too many dealin's with wimmen o' her caliber ter let her git away with me. I'll let her talk first an' see what her little game is."

The boy entered the room, hat in hand, and the woman said:

"You want to see Miss Norseman?"

"You have got it straight," Billy acknowledged.

"Well," the woman went on, "she is not in at present I think, but you can state your business to me and I will tell her when she comes."

"Very much obliged ter ye," returned the boy, "but that won't be actin' accordin' ter orders. I was told ter see th' young lady herself an' nobody else."

This put the woman right on her guard, and she was instantly determined that not only should the boy not see Miss Norseman, but that he should not leave the house until she had learned what his errand was.

"Then your business must be of some importance," she remarked, as she rose and shut the door tight.

"Can't say nothin' about that," returned Billy, "but it is fer th' young lady herself, an' I hain't no right ter tell it ter any one else."

"Well, you are right, or that is to say you would be under ordinary circumstances; but in this case you can do no harm by telling me what you have to say."

"Orders is orders," protested Billy, "an' it is one o' th' rules o' my life ter obey orders ef I bust owners."

"May I inquire who sent you here?" the woman questioned.

"I take it you are Mrs. Fauntleroy, ain't ye?" Billy counterquestioned.

"Yes, I am she," was the answer.

"Well, then, I don't see as it will do any harm fer me ter tell ye—"

"No, to be sure it will not," the woman broke in, smiling to think she had won so easy a victory; "go right ahead and tell me all. I am the young lady's guardian, you see, and what interests her interests me. Let me hear your story."

"Jest so," said Billy, "but you are gittin' ahead too fast. What I was goin' ter say was that I didn't see that it could do any hurt ter tell ye who it was sent me here, seein' as he seemed ter be a good friend o' yours."

"Oh!" with a shade of disappointment in the tone; "well, who was it sent you, then?"

"It was Mr. Sidney Whiteclover."

The woman looked relieved.

"Oh, it was he, was it? He is a particular friend of ours. You need not hesitate to speak out whatever he said."

"Yes, he seemed pertickler, that is a fact," Billy commented, "an' one of th' pints of his perticklerness was that I was ter see Miss Luella and nobody else. Bein' as she ain't in, however, I reckon I had better make my bow an' retire an' come again at some other time."

The woman would never hear to this. She was bound to know what the mystery was.

"No, you need not do that," she said, "for no doubt the young lady will soon be in. You can wait here, and I will go and see if she has come."

The woman left the room, and going up-stairs was soon in the presence of her niece.

"I am sorry to disturb you, dear," she said, "but there is a boy down-stairs who is determined to see you. I tried to put him off by telling him you were out, but it was no use. Perhaps you had better come down and see what he wants."

"Yes, tell him I will come," Luella answered, and with this message the woman immediately returned, taking up her place in the room, determined that at any cost she would be present.

"All right," said Billy. "I had an idee that she wasn't so fur away that she wouldn't git back again."

The woman made no comments. In a moment Luella came down and entered the room.

"This is the boy who was bound to disturb you," Mrs. Fauntleroy said, waving her hand to where Billy sat.

"What do you want?" the young lady asked, in gentle and pleasant tones.

"I have somethin' ter say ter you in th' strictest privateness," answered the boy, in his quaint way. "If I kin see you alone I will on-load."

"Whatever you have to say you may say in the presence of my aunt," Luella returned.

"That ain't accordin' ter orders," protested Billy. "What I have ter say ter ye I will say to ye alone or not at all. Now you kin suit yerself about hearin' it."

"Oh, well, if the silly boy is so determined," exclaimed Mrs. Fauntleroy, as she bounded up with a flourish, "I will retire."

With this she swung herself out of the room, closing the door not very softly. And, as Billy was wise enough to suspect, she went immediately to the rear room that was separated from the other by only folding doors.

"You are a sharp one," the boy mused, "but if you are goin' inter a near-by room in th' hope that you will hear what I have ter say you will git left bad."

"Now," invited the young lady as soon as they were alone, "make haste and let me hear what you have to say."

Billy coolly moved his seat nearer to hers, and said, speaking in a low tone of voice:

"What I have ter say is for your ears only, miss, so pardon my caution. You know Albert Tierson, I reckon, don't ye? Speak low, now."

That name won her interest at once, and she obeyed his injunction.

"Yes," she responded, in the same cautious tone, "what of him?"

"Well, he is in danger, an' so be you. Now, don't git excited, but jest lend yer ears ter what I have ter say. In th' first place I had ter tell that woman that I was here from Sidney Whiteclover, which isn't so. You kin settle th' case with her in any fashion you want to. Now list ter th' oracle."

Had it not been that Billy had mentioned the name of Albert Tierson, the young lady might have dismissed him without further ado, but she was interested now, as the boy well knew she would be. Billy knew well how to play his cards.

"Go ahead," she invited, "only make haste."

Billy went ahead then, and told her the whole story just as he knew it, and it is needless to say that he had an attentive listener. Not once was he interrupted, and the boy spoke in tones so low that no one could possibly overhear him.

"Now," he concluded, "I have done my duty, an' you are in possession of th' whole secret. But, don't let yer precious aunt suspect what you know, an' try an' git that solemn look off o' yer face. You will have ter fight 'em with their own kind o' weapons, an' don't hesitate ter do it. Be as meek as a lamb but as wise as a serpent when they are around."

"Boy, can you prove what you have said?" Luella said, despairingly.

"It ain't necessary," Billy answered, "fer it will prove itself. All you have got ter do is ter take warnin' from what ye have heard an' be on th' lookout accordin'ly. Th' greatest danger is ter be looked for from Whiteclover. Be as wary o' him as you would of a snake. Now where does that feller Tierson hang out? I want ter see him, too, so as to warn him."

"Yes, do so by all means," was the eager response, and she gave the desired address.

At that moment there came a knock at the door, and without waiting an instant Mrs. Fauntleroy opened it and came in.

"Oh, pardon my intrusion," she exclaimed, "but I thought that you must surely have finished your business by this time."

With her eyes glued to the keyhole of the door in the other room, she had become so filled with curiosity that she could stand it no longer. She had seen how eager a listener Luella was, and her guilty conscience would not let her remain longer silent.

"Th' business is all done," declared Billy, "an' I am about ter take my leave. Will you allow your servant to escort me to th' door, Mrs. Fauntleroy?"

CHAPTER XI.

MOVING TO CHECKMATE.

The woman looked at him in no loving manner.

"I will do myself that honor," she said, sarcastically.

"I cannot fail to appreciate the service," returned the boy, with a Chesterfieldian bow.

"And with immediate promptness," the woman added, rising and opening the door as she spoke.

Billy turned and bowed to Miss Norseman. "Then that is all you have got ter say ter Mr. Whiteclover, is it?" he observed.

"I have nothing more to say," the young lady responded, briefly.

"It will put th' old dame's mind a little at ease," thought Billy. "If I kin make her think it was Whiteclover sent me here."

In this he was right, for a shade of relief did pass over the woman's face.

She led the way to the front door, opened it, and Billy passed out.

"I hope there ain't no hard feelin's atween us," he observed, "fer that would be oupleasant, you know. That feller Whiteclover is dead gone on that gal, an' when a feller is in love he don't want everybody ter hear what he has ter say ter his girl. I have been thar myself and know all about it. For that reason and so forth, etcetera."

With these words, and another bow and a provoking grin, the boy went away, the woman slamming the door shut after him.

"Whiteclover is mighty particular all at once," she muttered, as she returned to the room where she had left her niece. "I will soon learn what his business was."

"How provoking that little wretch was," she observed, in her most pleasant manner. "I knew he was from dear Mr. Whiteclover, and thought I could save you the trouble of coming down, but he would not tell me his business."

"No," laughed Luella, "he played well the part of Love's messenger. It did not amount to anything, however, for no doubt Mr. Whiteclover will call himself before the evening is done."

"Then it was nothing important, eh? I thought perhaps it might be, from the very secrecy he observed."

The young lady laughed, she taking the advice the young street scout had given and making light of the matter, thus disguising its terrible importance.

"Are you not aware that a lover's business is always of great moment, auntie?" she playfully asked. "This you may be sure was not lacking in importance in that sense."

"You seem to be more inclined to favor Mr. Whiteclover," the aunt ventured.

The young lady dropped her eyes and gave the impression that her secret had been guessed. She was certainly not less artful than the elder woman, and the latter had her match.

"What do you advise me to say to him?" Luella asked.

Mrs. Fauntleroy's heart beat fast. Surely the victory was won. Whatever the secret or message that the boy had brought, it had won the girl over.

"In regard to what?" the woman inquired, innocently.

"Shall I marry him?" the girl asked, trying hard to force a blush to her face.

Mrs. Fauntleroy stepped forward and took her fondly in her arms.

"My dear child," she said, "you know that I have only your best interest at heart, and you shall have the best advice that I can give you."

Knowing now the perfidy of the woman, Luella shivered at her touch, trying hard not to let the emotion be seen, however.

"I believe Mr. Whiteclover to be a perfectly honorable man," the aunt went on, "and I do not think you can do better than to marry him. He is not without fortune, and many a girl would consider herself well off to have such an offer. I honestly and sincerely advise you to marry him."

"And when would you name the day, if you were in my place?"

"As to that, there need be no unseemly haste. A few weeks should be given you for preparations, at least, but I would not put him off longer than a month or two, and not longer than three at most."

"Thank you, auntie, you are very good; and now I have a request to make."

"What is that, my child?"

"Please do not let him know that you know anything about the matter. I want to hold my promise for just a little while, just long enough to make him all the more eager, you know. You can tell him that you have reason to believe his case is not hopeless, of course, but do not let on that you saw his messenger here to see me."

"I cannot understand why you desire this, my dear, but I promise it."

"Thank you. You will see that it is all for the best when you come to learn my reason. Keep my little secret, auntie, and leave me to deal with Sidney in my own way."

Mrs. Fauntleroy was certainly mystified. Here was something she could not understand. It was clear enough, however, that Luella had now turned in favor to Whiteclover, and that was enough for her. So long as all was working so well she need have no fear for the future, and she could well afford to humor the whim of her niece.

Luella retired to her room again, where she passed the next hour in writing a lengthy letter to her lover, Albert Tierson. In the room below, in the mean time, the mother and daughter were having an animated conversation concerning the mysterious and unaccountable change that had taken place. If they were deep in their plottings, Luella was none the less so, and in her they had their match, had the grounds been less unequal.

The idea of the young heiress may be briefly stated. Her main object was to gain time. Besides that, if she could lead Whiteclover to think that his suit was not hopeless, he would not be likely to use force where he had a fair prospect of winning without it. Then she had to warn her lover to be on the lookout for danger. These main precautions taken, she would next proceed to take sides with her honest guardian, and place herself under his protection. She fully realized the danger she would be in if she let her enemies know that she knew what their evil designs were.

Now, to return to Broadway Billy and follow him.

The young detective had done a good stroke of work, and when he left the house he set out with a lively gait and a cheerful air in quest of further adventures.

It was his intention to go to the place where he had heard Whiteclover and his friend plan to adjourn to as soon as they had finished their repast at the restaurant.

"This thing is jest a-boomin'," the boy mused as he hurried along; "an' there is th' promise o' lively times ahead. There is no tellin' where it will end, but they kin simmer it down as fine as they want ter an' they will find that William O' Broadway is bound ter be in at th' last b'ilin'. Th' only thing th' William aforesaid has got ter look out fer is ter take keer that he don't git inter th' pot himself while th' b'ilin' is goin' on. If I give 'em a show they will cook my goose without any great distress o' conscience, I reckon, an' that would be decidedly bad. Think it would be well fer me ter act jest a little prudent in th' game, an' if I kin drop in on 'em in disguise, so much th' better."

He was headed for the saloon kept by Barney Linn, and it was plain that it would be worse than folly for him to be seen there by the men he desired to shadow. But, what sort of disguise could he assume?

This was a question that did not puzzle him long.

Turning aside from the way he was going, he hastened around into another street that was not a great deal out of his course, and presently came to a little shop where it was immediately apparent that he was well known.

"Hello, Billy!" a man behind the little counter exclaimed; "what can I do for you this time?"

"You can make a dude o' me," was the boy's reply.

"And why do you want to be a dude? Are you at work with Speare, or some of the other boys again?"

This shop was one that was well known to detectives, and one that was well patronized by them. Its proprietor dealt in hair, chiefly; that is to say—in wigs and false beards, both for actual wear and for stage purposes. His business filled the wants of actors and detectives alike, to say nothing about the customers who sought his aid out of necessity, to supply what nature had seen fit to deprive them of in the way of hirsute covering. This had been his sole stock in trade at the start, but in order to please his customers he had widened its scope until it took in almost everything that a detective might ordinarily need.

"Yes," answered Billy, "I am in for it again and as it won't do fer me ter be seen in my proppy personny, ter quote a little Latin, I have dropped in on you. You want ter fix me out quick, fer there is no time ter lose."

"All right, step right into the back room there and throw off your hat and coat, and I will make a new boy of you in no time."

Billy did as directed, and the artist, if so he may be called, was soon at his work.

It took only a few moments to glue a mustache to the boy's lip, and then he was helped to don a frock-coat that was not any too small for him. This done, a high hat and a cane were provided, and he hastened forth completely changed in appearance.

"Old Anthony is a handy man in a case of this sort," he mused as he hurried along, "and there is no wonder that Speare and the others like him so well. Now those two fellers will have ter examine me with a miker-scoop ter tell who I am, an' then th' chances is they won't be able ter do it. They will take me fer a sure-enough, bony-fido dude."

It did not take him long to reach his destination.

Barney Linn's saloon was a lively place, and it was well filled at the hour of which we write. There was music in one end of the room, and a little stage where several singers, dancers, and dialect artists put forth efforts to draw and hold the crowd, while the proprietor of the place put forth his efforts to draw their money from their pockets.

Billy walked in as though he was right at home, his hat a little on one side and his cane swinging. He was pretending to be under the influence of something that was stronger than coffee. His knowledge in this respect, we are proud to say, was not from experience of his own, for he had never tasted of liquor; but it was from his observation of its effect upon others.

He did not pretend to be really drunk, but only slightly tipsy.

When he entered he had his eyes about him, and almost the first persons he saw were the very ones he was looking for. They were seated at a table about half-way down the room, and were earnestly engaged in conversation.

The boy went right on as though he was taking notice of no one, and dropped quietly into a chair just behind the two men, thus getting the same position he had had when they were in the restaurant.

No one took particular notice of him, except one of the waiter-girls, and she was interested no further than to learn what he would order. For that purpose she soon presented herself at his chair.

"What will ye have?" she inquired, with an air full of business.

"Well, er, ah," Billy drawled, "I guess you can aw bring me a glass of sodab."

"Fallin' back upon soft wash, are ye?" the young woman remarked with a smile.

"Well, er, yes," Billy answered. "You see it is good for the head when it is a little dizzy. Sany, did I walk chalk when I came in?"

"No," the girl responded, "you had a skate on;" and with another laugh she turned away, soon returning with a glass of soda, and Billy, settling down in his chair, prepared to drink at his leisure—and to listen.

CHAPTER XII.

OVERREACHED.

BROADWAY BILLY thought that he was perfectly secure, while the truth was he had never been on more dangerous ground in his life.

Good luck had been with him on many an expedition of this kind, but now it would seem that it was entirely against him.

The man he had set out to watch was sharper than he had counted on.

As the boy settled down in his chair, Whiteclover glanced around at him, and as he did so the rascal gave a start. There was something in the appearance of this young man that made him think of that hated young detective—Broadway Billy. Could it be he in disguise?

Whiteclover was sharp, as stated, and he did nothing that could apprise Billy of the fact that he was suspected.

"If it is that young rat," he thought, "this night will wind up his career of usefulness. We will put him where the dogs will harm him nevermore. This town is getting so infested with police spies and suckers that it is almost impossible to have any private talk with a pal. This is a great specimen of a free country."

Billy spread himself out in his chair as though he had come to stay, and sipped his soda contentedly. He had no idea that he was suspected, and that he was went to prove that his enemy had a sharp eye.

"Now," the boy thought, "here I am, an' they kin open their talk as soon as they please. I promise that I won't carry away more of their secrets than I kin git hold of. Don't reckon they kin guess who I am, an' I'll settle right down purty soon as though I am about half asleep."

Whiteclover said nothing to his companion just then, waiting to make sure that his suspicion was correct before he made it known, but in the mean time he kept an eye on the boy.

During this interval he guarded the pitch of his voice so as to make it impossible for the boy to catch anything that was said.

Matters stood thus for some time, neither side gaining anything.

Presently Whiteclover took from his pocket a little, round looking-glass, one about the size of a silver dollar, and adjusted it in his hand so as to keep constant watch of his suspected enemy.

"Who are ye pipin'?" his companion asked, in still guarded tone.

"This young buddy here behind us," was the response.

The first speaker took a covert glance at Billy.

"That clam," he observed in disgust; "he ain't got sense enough ter go into th' house when it rains. He is one of them dude fellers that likes ter suck a cane."

"Don't be too sure about his bein' a clam," warned Whiteclover.

"Why, who d'ye think he is?"

"Wait till I get a good look to make sure, and I'll tell you."

All this, in the general noise and confusion that was all around them, was too low-spoken to reach the ears of the young ferret.

Billy grew impatient after awhile, and began to think that he was not going to hear anything at all. He took a glance around, to learn what the men were doing, and as he did so Whiteclover obtained a good side view of his face by means of the glass.

"Their talk seems ter be mighty earnest," the boy cogitated, "but a feller would have ter set up on their collars ter ketch what they say in all this noise. I am of th' opinion, sweet William, that we are goin' ter git left. What d'ye think about it? Ye think we will, eh? Well, soda I," and with the thought he took another sip from his glass, smiling as he did so at the very weakness of the mental pun he had perpetrated.

Whiteclover put his glass away into his pocket again, satisfied.

"Well?" his companion interrogated.

"Do you know anything about Broadway Billy, Abe?" Whiteclover inquired.

"I have heard of him," was the answer.

"Ever see him?"

"Yes, I saw him once in court as a witness."

These remarks were exchanged in whispered tones.

"Well, don't move to give it away that we are onto him, but this fellow just behind us here is Broadway Billy."

The face of Abel Stanhope—that was the man's name—turned pale, and he could not help a start. It was clear that he had heard of the boy detective, and perhaps the remembrance of it was not pleasant.

After a pause Stanhope took a sly look at the boy.

"You call that thing Broadway Billy?" he demanded.

"That is who it is, or I am a Dutchman," Whiteclover insisted.

"Then you are a Dutchman. This feller is one of them sickly, cigarette dudes. You don't see Billy togged out that way."

"Look at the size of his neck, and then say whether he is very sickly or not. I tell you this is Broadway Billy, and we have got to put him out of the way."

"Got ter put him out of th' way—what fur?"

"Because he is no good in our camp. He is onto us, and that is why he is here in this make-up. We have got to do for him."

"You must be mistaken. What could he be after us fur? What would have put him onto us?"

Whiteclover related the incident of his lost letter, and of his going to see Billy about it.

"You see how it is," he concluded. "Even if the boy did not find the letter, my going to him has aroused his suspicions, and he has taken to shadowing me to see if he couldn't work up a case."

Nothing of this did they allow to reach Billy's ears.

"Well, if all that is so, there must be somethin' in it," Stanhope admitted. "Let me take the glass for a minute until I get a good look at him. Yes," after a long and careful scrutiny, "that is certainly th' feller."

"Yes, that's th' lad, fast enough; and now how are we to do for him? You see how necessary it is for him to be laid away. No doubt he thinks he is playing a good hand, and so he is; but he hasn't any idea that we are onto him so heavy."

"Can't you think of some plan?"

"Yes, no doubt I can. Let me try for a moment."

There was a pause in their conversation for a few minutes, and then Whiteclover said, in the same guarded tone:

"Here is the very plan. We will decoy him into a trap. We will talk loud enough for him to hear what we say, and then we'll go out and let him follow us. Ha, ha, ha! his name will be Dennis before he knows what has happened to him."

Some very earnest conversation followed then, in which Whiteclover set forth his scheme in detail, and Stanhope fell in with the idea in every particular.

In the mean time Broadway Billy was growing more and more impatient and disgusted. He had not been able thus far to overhear a word that had been said, and it did not seem likely that he would. It was about the driest work that he had undertaken in some time. That is to say, it would have been dry had it not been for the soda in which he indulged freely.

Presently, however, and not a little to his surprise, the men began to talk louder, and by leaning back in his chair and listening closely he could catch their words.

"Well, we will part here, then," he heard Whiteclover say.

"Yes," Stanhope responded, "we will part here, and I will see you again to-morrow night."

"And I will go at once and see about arranging for the job."

"All right. You want to take care that no one follows ye."

"I know that as well as you do; but who is there to follow me? We are running this thing too still to have any one on our track."

"You are, eh?" thought the young detective. "You jest wait an' see about that. If there ain't a rattlin' 'mongst th' dry bones afore long, then you kin sell me cheap."

"Right you are," returned Stanhope, in response to Whiteclover; "but we can't be too careful, you know. In business of this sort we don't want any watchers."

"I will take care of all that, and now we will take one more drink and part. I will leave you here and you can go home when you please."

"All right, that is understood."

Broadway Billy rose and went out. It was clear to him that he had heard all he was likely to, and he wanted to be where he could watch Whiteclover when he came out.

Whiteclover and his friend laughed heartily.

"He has dropped right into the trap," Whiteclover observed, "and now it only remains for us to cut short his career. There are a good many of our friends who will be glad enough to hear of his demise."

Billy had other thoughts. He crossed the street, and there took his stand in the shadow of a doorway.

"I am onter them now fer sure," he reflected.

"I thought I wasn't goin' ter git any information, but it seems I did, an' jest enough ter let me onter what they intend ter do. If they think there won't be any one on their trail they will be muchly mistaken."

For once in his career Broadway Billy was overreached, and was about to find himself in an unlooked-for dilemma.

In a little while Whiteclover came out of the place and walked away down the street, and Billy followed him like a shadow. The man had not looked around on coming out, but he felt assured that the boy would be after him.

He proceeded at a slow walk for some distance, and presently stopped on a corner, lighted a cigar, and waited.

Billy naturally thought he was waiting for some one to join him there, but in that the boy was mistaken, for he was only stopping to kill time, in order to let his accomplice, Stanhope, reach a prearranged point.

After a wait of ten or fifteen minutes he went on, this time at a more rapid pace, Billy keeping him right in sight the same as before.

Several times the man glanced around, but only once did he catch a glimpse of the young detective.

"Sweet pertaters!" the boy presently exclaimed, when the man turned into a certain street, "he is going to old Appletree's house. Now, how in th' name o' snakes be I ter foller him in there? It can't be did. Billy, we are goin' ter git left an left bad. Seems we ain't gettin' on with our usual degree o' fastness in this case. I guess we'd better shut up shop an' go out o' business."

Thus he muttered as he followed along, but when his man came to the house he expected him to enter a new surprise awaited him—more than

one, in fact. The man did not stop and turn up the steps, but kept right on.

"It don't seem ter look more'n a heap as though he was goin' inter that house, after all," the boy muttered. "No matter, I reckon I kin foller wherever he leads. It won't be th' first blind lead that I have follered. My proceedin' might not jest meet the approval of Inspector Br— Hello! hands off o' me! I am private an' personal property, an' mustn't be handled. What d'ye—"

A heavy hand had suddenly dropped upon the boy's shoulder, and now strong fingers clutched his throat, and a "billy" descended with a sharp thud upon his head, rendering him instantly insensible.

CHAPTER XIII.

BILLY FACES DEATH.

THE scheme which Sidney Whiteclover and Abel Stanhope had concocted in Barney Linn's saloon was thus far a success. Now Broadway Billy was in their power, utterly helpless, and it only remained to be seen what fate awaited him.

The man who had thus attacked the boy was, of course, Stanhope, and no sooner was the attack made than Whiteclover ran back to his assistance.

"Have you leaded him?" he asked, hastily.

"Yes, an' he won't squirm for half an hour," Stanhope responded.

"Lay hold of him then, quick, and we will get him out of sight before any one gets a chance to see us."

This attack had taken place right in front of the house of Prof. Appletree, and now the two rascals picked their victim up, carried him up the steps, and in about as short a space of time as it has taken to write the words, the door of the old house was shut behind them, and Broadway Billy was as good as dead, so far as their intentions are concerned.

"Where with him now?" inquired Stanhope, as soon as they were in the hall and had shut the door.

"Right up-stairs," was the answer. "The old man is not here to-night, and we shall be able to carry out my idea grandly."

Once more they took up their insensible burden, and now they carried him right up to the top of the house, where the great flying-machine reposed.

Here they laid him down on the floor in no gentle manner, and Whiteclover gave expression to his feelings in a hearty laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! ho, ho, ho!" he roared, "but this is the best thing of the year. 'If we remove Broadway Billy from the land of the living we will be doing the best stroke of work we ever did. He has been a terror to some of our best friends, Abe, and this is our chance to square accounts with him.'"

"And we will do it, too. But, what is the rest of your plan?"

"Let's make him secure, and then I will tell you."

A gag was forced into the boy's mouth, and in a few minutes he was bound hand and foot. There was little prospect of his getting out of their power.

"Now," said Whiteclover, when they were done, "I will tell you what I have in mind for him. You see those bags hanging up there?"

"Yes; but before you go any further tell me what this thing is," indicating the flying-machine.

They had bound the boy in the dark, and now when Whiteclover had lighted the gas, their surroundings were revealed.

"Oh, that is only another of the old man's patents," was the careless reply. "He would have a fit if he knew I had brought a stranger here; but as your head does not run to patents, I guess there is no danger of your carrying away any of his ideas. Now—"

"What is th' thing, though?—that is what I want to know."

"It is only some crazy idea he has that he can make a submarine ship," was the equally careless and false explanation. "Now pay attention to what I have to say, and you will see what a grand fate our young hero here is to meet. You see those bags?"

"Yes, I see them."

"Well, in each of those bags is a balloon, not very large, but large enough to fly away with a man. Now, I am going to get out one of those balloons, fill it with gas, tie this young detective to it by the feet, and set it off. Away he will go, and when he comes down he will land on his head, and there will be an end of him."

"Ha, ha, ha! that is a rich idea, and no mistake. Wouldn't it be better to hang him to it

by the neck? That would make sure work of him."

"Oh, it will be sure enough, so you needn't trouble yourself about that. When the thing comes down it will dash his brains out, even if he don't die of fright long before that. Besides, that would cheat us of the scare it will give him."

"Then you mean to wait till he comes to before you start him, eh?"

"Certainly. We won't have to wait for that, however, for he will come to before the balloon is ready."

"Well, you are a chief at plotting such things, and no mistake. No ordinary man would ever have thought of such a trick."

"We won't stop to consider that point, but will proceed with the business in hand. It will cost me a neat penny to replace the balloon, but the satisfaction of the thing is worth the price."

With this remark Whiteclover walked over to where the bags were hanging, and took one of them down. Carrying it out near the light, he next opened the bag and took out the folded balloon it contained.

"This done, he spread the balloon out upon the floor and proceeded to make ready to fill it. As he had assisted the old man in this kind of work two or three times, he knew what had to be done, and how to do it.

When it was all unfolded he put two bowed sticks in the netting at the top, adjusted a string to them where they crossed, and then suspended the lifeless silken bag from a hook overhead in the roof.

This accomplished to his satisfaction, he proceeded next to secure the netting to the floor by means of several rings set in a circle.

"Now," he said, as he viewed his work with satisfaction, "we are ready for the gas. When we are done with that we shall be ready for the boy."

Going down to the room below, he soon returned with a piece of rubber hose about ten feet in length, one end having a screw cap to fit the gas-pipe, and the other end being furnished with a neat little brass pump to be worked by foot-power.

To the pump another hose was quickly attached, and that in turn was introduced into the neck of the balloon. Then the main hose was made fast to the gas-pipe, and the filling process was begun.

About this time Broadway Billy began to recover consciousness.

When he first opened his eyes he could not imagine where he was nor what had happened. There was the balloon, hanging like some ghastly suicide in the light of the single gas-jet, while the two men made him think of all he had ever heard or read about ghouls, etc. From them his eyes ran on around the strange-looking place, and finally rested upon the great flying machine.

As soon as he saw that, the whole thing came to him like a flash. He recalled what had taken place there during the afternoon, where he had been since, and everything up to the time when he had been stopped and assaulted.

"Sweet pertaters!" he mentally exclaimed, "but I am in a pickle this time for sure. Speare told me to watch out sharp or I would git inter trouble, an' sure enough I have. Now I reckon that my life ain't worth a copper cent. I have had so many close shaves that I suppose they will make double sure o' me this time. It will be awful mean in 'em if they do, and no mistake. They orter consider my youth an' beauty. I am too young and beautiful ter die, an' what will my best girl do then? Really, I think I will have ter give 'em my views on th' matter, if they will kindly take this dirty gag out o' my talker. My head feels purty sore; reckon there must be a bump on it as big as a goose-egg. Don't reckon that my present predicament would meet th' entire 'proval o' Inspector Br— Hello! hang me if that thing ain't a balloon! It must be one of th' perfesser's balloons that he intends ter fly his patent kite with. What in th' name o' wonders kin they be fillin' it up fer?"

The two men were too busy to pay any attention to the boy now, so he was left for some time to his own reflections.

Gradually the folds of the balloon began to swell out, and by and by its graceful outline was well defined.

"It begins to look something like a balloon now," Stanhope presently observed.

"Yes, it is filling out now," Whiteclover agreed, "and it will soon be full. I am anxious to see the start. See if the cub has come to yet."

Abe stepped to where Billy lay, and took a

look at him; but hearing the order given, Billy had suddenly resolved to feign to be still unconscious, in the hope of hearing something of importance.

"Yes," he reported, after giving the boy a push or two with his foot. "He is still gone."

"He isn't dead, is he?"

Abe felt, and found that Billy's heart was beating all right.

"No," he returned, "his pump is goin'."

"All right, then, let him alone till we are ready for him, and if he isn't here by that time, we will try and bring him back."

"Sweet pertaters!" was the boy's inward exclamation, "what do they intend ter do with me? They talk about bein' ready fer me after awhile. This onsartainty is a heap worse than knowin' th' hull truth right out plump. What has th' balloon got ter do with it?"

Whiteclover worked away at the little pump, and the balloon filled out more and more with each passing minute. It now stood upright, and was pulling hard upon the ropes that held it to the floor. More and more its sides distended under the inward pressure, and finally it stood forth in perfect shape, a thing of beauty.

"There!" Whiteclover exclaimed, "the thing is done, and I'll bet it would lift a thousand pounds and carry it. The boy won't be more than a featherweight for it."

"Sweet per-ta-ters!" and Billy's heart almost stood still at the thought. "They mean ter send me up in a balloon this time, sure as I am a livin' sinner! Here's a state of things, and no error about it. What in th' world will I do now? Fer a feller that has been inter all th' fixes that I have been in of late, it would seem that there couldn't be anything new that they could invent fer me; but I reckon I haven't been half-way through th' mill yet. Great pop-guns! if Skinny was ter know of th' fix I am in now, he would set out ter wunst and buy drapin'-goods ter put th' stand in mournin'."

Whiteclover secured the mouth of the balloon so that the gas could not escape, removed the pumping apparatus from it, and then observed:

"Now for the boy."

Turning to where Billy lay, he caught hold of his feet and dragged him out into the light.

Seeing that it would not be of use for him to sham any longer, the boy now had his eyes wide open, and looked up at his captors with the most innocent expression he could assume.

"Broadway Billy!" spoke Whiteclover, "your little jig is danced. Your time is come, and you are about to shuffle the mortal coil. Your disguise is a pretty good one, but you got left this time badly. I will relieve you of this moustache," taking hold of it and pulling it off with a jerk; "and also of this long-tail coat," cutting it from him without untying his hands; "and now we will send you up aloft."

"Are ye goin' ter give him a chance ter say anything?" asked Stanhope.

"Nary a chance. We have got the dead-wood on him, and if we let him set his mill to running, he will never stop. We will go through his pockets, however, and take out everything that might lead to the identity of his carcass when it is found."

Suiting action to the words, Whiteclover began to explore Billy's pockets, and in them he found his missing letter.

"Ha! you young whelp!" he cried, "you were mighty innocent about this letter, when you had it all the time. It is mighty lucky for us that we have got hold of him in time, Abe, or he would have surely spoiled our game for us. We have nipped him right in the bud, as it were, before he could do us any harm. Ha, ha, ha!"

They both laughed heartily, looking upon it as the richest kind of a joke.

CHAPTER XIV.

SWEEPING THE HEAVENS.

IN spite of the terrible situation he was in, Broadway Billy kept his nerve, and while his two captors were laughing so heartily to think that they had nipped his game in the bud, as they expressed it, he laughed inwardly with satisfaction to think that he had already got in his work and set the ball in motion.

He had seen Stanton Gildersleeve, and had put him under the care of Detective Speare; he had seen Miss Norseman, and had warned her of her danger; and now no matter what these men did to him, their game was in a fair way to be balked.

"You kin laugh," he thought, "but th' laugh will be on th' other side o' yer faces afore ye are through with this thing, or I am no prophet. You kin do yer worst with me, but that won't undo th' work that I have done."

Whiteclover placed the letter in his own

pocket, together with everything else that Billy had possessed, and among other things was a neat sum of money.

Billy would have given almost anything just then if he could have freed his mind a little, and told them what he thought of them, but they evidently had no intention of giving him the opportunity to do so.

"You cussed young dog!" Whiteclover presently hissed, "you have taken your last trick in the game, and now you shall pay up in full for all the fun you have been having. Do you know what we intend to do with you?"

Billy could not very well reply.

"We are going to send you up in this balloon, tied to it by your heels," the rascal went on. "It will be a grand voyage for you, and when you come down you will be killed so quick that the recording angel will not have time to catch your name. We wish you a pleasant trip, and all the sport that it will afford. We hope you will enjoy the ride; hey, Abe?"

"That we do," the other rascal responded.

Whiteclover now took a piece of small but strong rope, tied one end of it to the boy's feet in such a way that it could not possibly slip, and then secured the other end to the bottom of the balloon, leaving a space of about two yards between his feet and the balloon.

"There," he observed, "that will give you plenty of room to swing, and when you come down near enough to the ground, it will knock out your brains against the first obstacle you meet. I would not bet ten cents against ten dollars that you will not get killed. It is sure death, my gay young buck, and that will be a pleasant thought for you as you soar aloft to sweep the sky."

It is useless to say that Billy was not frightened, for he was, and badly, too; but as that did not help the matter any, he would not have let it be known even had he been allowed to talk. It was not his nature to let his enemies see that he was in any way disturbed by their threats.

"Well," asked Stanhope, "are you ready to let him go?"

"Yes, we are all ready now," was the response. "I will unhook and take off a portion of the roof of this shed just over the balloon here, and then we will cut the rope and let him fly."

The roof of the shed on the housetop was merely temporary, as has been said before, and was secured in sections by means of hooks. This had been done so that the professor could take it down whenever he chose, for the purpose of trying his machine.

Whiteclover went up and removed four of the sections, and the balloon was free to ascend toward the starlit heavens as soon as the ropes were cut.

"There is one danger that you want to look out for," cautioned Stanhope.

"What is that?" Whiteclover demanded.

"It is th' danger of his hittin' his head on th' house afore th' balloon gits clear of it. It would be onlucky fer him to spill his brains right here, you know."

"I have thought of all that," assured Whiteclover. "I will attach a longer piece of rope to this heavy ring, and will let the thing up slowly until it is high enough to clear everything, and then I will cut it and let it go."

"Yes, that is better than lettin' it dash right up through th' hole at th' start."

Whiteclover proceeded to do this, that is, to attach a strong rope to the bottom of the balloon, and when that was done he directed his accomplice to cut all the smaller ones.

Now everything was ready for the start, and slowly the balloon was allowed to ascend through the hole in the roof, with our Broadway Billy hanging head downward from the bottom of it, his hands still tied behind his back and the gag still in his mouth.

He was certainly in a horrible situation.

When the graceful aerial thing was about ten feet clear of the roof of the temporary shed, the villain, ascending to the roof by the ladder, cut the retaining rope with one sharp blow of a hatchet, when, instantly, the great pouch shot upward like a rocket, Broadway Billy dangling in the air.

"Good-by, Broadway Billy!" cried Whiteclover. "We are sorry to part with ye, but part we must. You can give our regards to the old woman who sweeps the cobwebs from the sky, when you fall in with her in your travels. Now, up you go!"

The two men laughed then as though their sides would split. It was the most novel thing they had ever witnessed, and to think that it

was all of their own inventing added to the pleasure it brought them.

They watched the graceful thing for some moments as it went up and up, drifting away toward the north as it ascended, and when it had got up so high that it seemed no larger than a hat they closed the roof, put things in order as they had found them, and left the house, to carry out other villainy that Whiteclover had in mind.

To describe the sensation which Broadway Billy experienced when the balloon shot upward into the air, is impossible. Of all his adventures and dangers, this seemed to be by far the worst that he had met with yet. A thousand thoughts surged into his brain at the same time. A cold perspiration broke out all over him, and his head began to swim, as further and further away the world seemed to fly, leaving him suspended there in the depth of measureless space. Up and up and up he rose, until the city below him looked like a mere playground, and its twin rivers like mere silver threads. And still up and up and up.

Finding that he was growing sick, the unhappy boy shut his eyes, and held them shut for some time. This had the effect to steady his head a little, but when next he looked down his heart almost stopped with fright. He had got so high up that it seemed he could see the outline of the whole world below him. There on the east was old ocean, below were cities, towns, and rivers, and on the west spread the dark hills.

The world did not seem so big after all, for he could see all there was of it, it appeared, and it looked to be perfectly flat and round.

And how cold it was! When he had started it was a hot summer night. Now it was like winter. He shivered, and the thought that he would freeze was not altogether unreasonable.

At first his great fear had been that he might fall, but now that he had got so high, and the balloon still held fast to him—as it were, that fear passed off. Now he turned his thoughts to the balloon. Was it safe, and would it descend after awhile of its own accord? From what his enemies had said, he might expect it to collapse after a time and let him drop. If such a thing as that happened, there was no possible hope of his escaping with his life.

He had to keep his eyes closed a good deal of the time, for when he opened them his head would swim so that he was in danger of losing his senses. He had noted the direction in which he was going, and found that it was toward the north. Below him now could be seen nothing but the semi-dark outline of the earth.

The moon was at the full, as perhaps we have forgot to mention before, and by its light he was enabled to see the little we have mentioned.

After a time the first sensation passed away, and he could think a little more calmly of his desperate situation. He was now almost chilled with cold, but he was collected in thought, and now could keep his eyes open and look where he would. To be sure it was far from pleasant to hang downward so long, but he was getting used to that too.

"Well," he reflected, "they have done me up this time, that is sure. This is the worst thing that has happened to me yet. There is no knowing how it will end, but I must hope for the best. I don't feel like thinkin' any nonsense now, but I would like ter have Skinny see me in my present fix. Sweet pertaters! it wouldn't do fer him ter be in my place, fer he is such a light-weight that th' balloon would never stop goin' up with him. It seems ter have gone up about as fur as it kin go, an' is now floatin' off to'rds Canada. Wonder what th' queen's subjecks will think when they see me comin'. No doubt they will take me fer a bank cashier or a boodle alderman. But, great hoss-fly! I have no desire ter go so far. I must stop this machine somewhere inside o' Uncle Sam's domain, if it is possible ter do it."

Up to this time he had made no effort whatever to free his hands, and he now put it to the test. Much to his delight he found that the cords that held his wrists had become loosened, probably by the rough handling he had had at the start, and it was no trouble at all for him to free them.

"Ha! bully! 'rah fer our side!" he exclaimed, as he swung his arms to warm his hands a little. "This is a heap better, even if I hain't got much use fer 'em. And now ter git this dirty gag out o' my mouth."

It took him but a moment to remove the gag, and then he tried his lung power by a lusty yell.

Much to his surprise, though, he hardly recog-

nized his own voice. It had a strange and unearthly tone that startled him.

The rope by which the balloon had been held just previous to its being set free was hanging near him, and, catching hold of it, he drew himself up until he stood upright, his feet now supported by the rope from which he had been hanging.

At first he thought he would try to release his feet too, but, on second reflection, he saw that it would not be a wise thing to do. In case he should become insensible, or should slip, he would then certainly fall. As it was now, he was sure of support so long as the balloon remained sound.

The wisdom of this was soon practically experienced. In trying to climb on up to the netting of the balloon, he slipped and fell, and but for the fact that his feet were securely bound, would have dashed to the earth and been instantly killed. As it was, he was brought up with a jerk that almost dislocated his neck, and strained every muscle in his body.

For some time he hung there, as he had hung at first, having no strength to make another climb, and as he waited to regain strength, he noticed that the balloon seemed to be descending. Was it true, or did he only fancy it? Yes, after paying close attention for some minutes, he was satisfied that he was not mistaken. He was nearing the earth once more.

The explanation was simple, had he known the truth of it. His fall had given the balloon a severe strain, and one of its many seams had sustained a slight rip, thus allowing the gas to escape.

He had now been up about one hour, and was getting decidedly tired of the experience. He was not sorry to find that he was coming down, and now the only thing to worry about was the landing. Would he make it without harm to himself, or would he be killed as his enemies had predicted? There was one thing in his favor that they had not counted on, and that was that he had now the use of his hands and arms. It would not be his fault if he did not yet come out alive, and live to see the rascals punished.

CHAPTER XV.

LUCK FAVORS THE VILLAIN.

THE interview between the detective and old Mr. Gildersleeve was one that it is not necessary to set forth, as has been said before.

Speare heard the story in all its details, and took hold of the case. He advised the old gentleman to keep close to the hotel, as Billy had already told him to do, promising him that he would do all that could be done to right the wrong.

The old gentleman put his trust in him, promising to do as he directed, and Speare set out upon the business.

He looked first toward the home of the Fauntleroy for his starting point, and went there. He asked to see Miss Norseman, but was told that she was not at home. Here he was balked. He did not yet want to let it be known just what was in the wind, knowing that the woman would no doubt take alarm and get out of his present reach. In this dilemma he turned away, leaving an assumed name, and saying that he would call again on the morrow.

Broadway Billy had given him all the points he could, and about the only other course open to him now was to find Whiteclover and block some of his arrangements.

With this in mind he set out to find that gentleman, but was not successful in his search. He visited the haunts where it would seem that he would be most likely to fall in with him, but he found him not.

Here he was balked again. It would seem that Broadway Billy was the better man of the two, but it is to be remembered that Billy had a peculiar talent that the regular detective did not possess. He had boyish cheek, and had the years in his favor to carry him through as a boy where a man could make no success at all.

Somewhat chagrined, but not by any means defeated, the detective gave up his hunt for the time being, resolved to take a new and more determined start at the home of Mrs. Fauntleroy on the morrow. Besides this, he counted a great deal upon Broadway Billy, looking upon him as really his partner in the work, and expecting to have a report from him in the morning that would shed much light upon the case. He rightly believed that Billy would be on the track of the leading rascal in the game, and if no bad luck fell to his lot would no doubt pick up valuable points.

With these ideas in mind, therefore, the detective gave up the task for the night.

And now to return to the other characters in our play.

In writing to Albert Tierson, Luella Norseman had taken a step that was to place her into the hands of her enemy most effectually. She was engaged to be married to Tierson, but their wedding day had not been set, and now she saw that it could not take place within the six months or so previous to her coming of age. She was not so weak as to throw away her rightful fortune in such a way now that she was made aware of her father's strange will, nor would she by such an act give her aunt and cousin the victory over her.

The letter she wrote to Tierson explained the whole matter to him, and further, she informed him that she was ready at any moment to leave her aunt's house and live with his mother until such time as they concluded to marry. Further still, she requested him to speak to his mother at once, laying the matter before her, and if she was willing to take her into her home, to send for her even that night and she would go.

Now that the mask was removed, and that the false faces of her relatives were exposed, she could not bear their presence.

There was one servant in the house whom Luella thought she could trust, but that one was about the worst person she could have selected to post her letter for her. It was her idea to send her letter by special post, when Tierson would receive it in about an hour. She had a special-post stamp, and putting that on, with the other postage, she called the girl up and gave the letter into her hands, telling her to lose no time in putting it into a box, so that it would be taken out by the postman on his next round.

The girl gave her promise that she would do so, but no sooner was she out of the room than she laughed and said to herself:

"This is a letter to that feller Tierson, and it will be as good as five dollars ter me if I deliver it to Mister Whiteclover; and faith that is what I will do with it."

Such a letter to fall into the hands of that rascal would place the girl right in his power.

The servant evidently knew Whiteclover well, and this was no doubt not the first work of the kind she had done for him.

Quickly obtaining leave to go out, she donned her hat and was in a short time down on the Bowery, showing by her manner that she was not a stranger to that neighborhood.

Her search for Whiteclover lasted for quite a time, and she even went to the place where she knew he lived, but he was not there. At last she met him and Stanhope, however, and the letter was put into his possession.

"You are a brick, my girl," the rascal complimented, "and here is a V. for you. You have done me a bigger favor this time than you imagine. Do not let it be known but that you posted this letter just as you were requested to do."

"Trust me fer that," laughed the girl, as she pocketed the money.

"Abe," Whiteclover chuckled, as the two walked on, "I am in luck clear up to my eyes. I have been puzzling my head how to abduct that girl, and now she has opened the way for me herself."

"The deuce she has!"

"That is what she has. She has put the game right into my hands. What is more, that young devil of a boy that we have just sent up in the balloon had got ahead of us badly, and has seen the girl and given all my points away to her."

"The whelp!"

"Just so. But, we have the whip-hand over the team now, and if I don't make things hum you can call me mud. There is no time to ask or answer questions. You go and hire a team and closed carriage as soon as you can, and come to the corner of Lexington avenue and—th street, and wait there till I join you."

"I will do it, you kin depend on it."

So they parted, and Whiteclover went at once to see Mrs. Fauntleroy.

"Well, allow me to congratulate you," that lady said, when he entered her presence. "Whatever the word was that you sent to Luella, it has won her over, and she is ready to marry you. She did not want me to tell you this, but it was too good to keep."

Whiteclover looked at her in disgust.

"So is your grandmother ready to marry me," he snarled; "read that."

The woman took the letter and read it through, her face assuming all colors as she did so. Here were heavier guns than she was prepared for.

"Why," she faltered, when she had reached the end, "the boy said he was from you, and his story was so straight that I could not doubt him. He seemed so—"

"Yes, dast him! that is his game. Do you know who that boy was? He was one of the best detectives in this town."

The woman acted as though she was on the point of fainting.

"Can it be possible?" she gasped.

"It not only can be, but it is," was the reply. "Now that this thing has been forced to a head, we must act with promptness and force a winning hand. Now if you will lend me your help I can secure that girl by letting her fall right into her own trap."

"How can you do that?"

"Listen and I will tell you. I will come here with a forged note for her. It will purport to be from her lover—curse him! I will come in a carriage, ready to take her to his mother's. The note will give her a chance to say to you that she is called suddenly to see a sick friend. You will urge her to go, and will see that she is properly dressed for a long trip. When we get her into the carriage I will give her a little chloroform, and when she comes to she will be many miles away from here at a place of mine out in the country. When she returns here it will be as my wife. You are wise enough to understand all the rest without any more words."

"Good, good!" the heartless woman cried. "It will serve her right, and will secure to you the promised fortune. Go ahead with the game, and I will help you all I can in every way possible."

With this understanding Whiteclover took his leave, and went to the place where he had told Stanhope to meet him.

The latter was there, with a team and carriage as he had been directed and Whiteclover proceeded at once to give him and the driver further directions.

A short time later this carriage drew up in front of the Fauntleroy house, and a man—Whiteclover in disguise—sprung out and rung the bell.

He asked to see Miss Norseman, and when she came down he handed her a note, which read as follows:

"MY DEAR LUELLA:—"

"Mother is all ready to receive you. Come immediately in the carriage I send. If any questions are asked, you can say that you are called out to see a sick friend. The danger will justify the fib."

"Sincerely,

"ALBERT."

Just as the young lady had read this note, Mrs. Fauntleroy appeared upon the scene.

"What is it?" she inquired.

"A carriage has been sent for me, requesting me to come at once to the house of a friend," Luella explained.

Much to her surprise her aunt not only asked no particulars, but urged her to prepare and go at once.

"Do not delay," she said; "for it must be urgent indeed. Your friend may be dying. Dress as quickly as you can, so as to be presentable, and go. Shall I send one of the servants with you?"

"No, you need not do that," said the girl, "I will go alone. I will be ready in a very few minutes," to the waiting man.

"What did I tell you?" chuckled Whiteclover, as soon as she was gone. "I will have her out of the city in less than an hour, and tomorrow she will find herself miles away from here. Oh, we are bound to win."

"Yes, you have hit a good plan, and I can see no reason why it should not work well. If she refuses to marry you, you— But, there is no need to tell you what to do."

In a short time Luella came down, ready for her ride, and entered the carriage without any suspicion whatever that anything was wrong. She was a little surprised to have the strange man enter with her, but said nothing, as she had only a short distance to go.

When presently the carriage stopped, however, and another man sprung in, then she was alarmed.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" she demanded, spiritedly.

"It means that you are in a trap, my little beauty," responded Whiteclover, and as he spoke he threw his arms around her and pressed a sponge damp with chloroform to her face.

The poor girl struggled for a moment, but the deadly fumes soon overcame her and she sunk down into insensibility.

It was but a short drive to the Grand Central Station, and there the two men boarded a train, taking their victim with them, saying that she

was an invalid and the wife of one of them. Telegrams were sent ahead to their destination, and when they arrived there, two hours later, a carriage was awaiting them. Into this the girl was put, and their journey was continued over a rough country road that led through a dense wood.

CHAPTER XVI.

BY THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE.

SLOWLY but surely the balloon from which Broadway Billy was banging descended toward the earth, and as the boy looked down he saw that he was going to land in a wild and woody country.

The light of the moon was sufficient for him to see things with some clearness and certainty. Here and there were fields, here and there a house and out-buildings; two or three streams and a small lake were to be seen, but all the rest was wood.

"Sweet pertaters! if I am goin' ter land in th' woods," the boy said to himself, "I am likely ter have all th' buttons ripped off o' my vest. That ain't a pleasant prospect, not by any manner o' means. Guess I had better climb up my rope again, and so be ready ter land feet first. Don't reckon that I'll try ter ontie my feet till I git down ter terry firmy, though, fer I might git another fall."

Taking hold of the rope that still hung near him, the boy once more climbed up, and this time succeeded in getting a firm hold upon the netting of the balloon.

"There," he muttered, "that is some better, an' now I am ready fer th' come-down. I wonder if th' conductor of th' thing will call out th' name of th' station when we git there? Sweet pertaters! but I have had a ride, an' if I kin only come out alive I will have a tale ter tell ter Skinny that will cause his eyes ter hang out like th' eyes of a b'iled crab. If I kin save this balloon I will keep it ter put in my moozeum when I git ter be chief o' p'lice."

The balloon went on and on toward the north, but all the time it was getting nearer and nearer to the earth, and at last the end of the rope to which Billy was hanging began to touch the tops of the tallest of the trees. Lower it settled, and soon the boy was knocked this way and that by the tops and the branches of the giants of the wood.

"That is what I call rough on me, a free citizen of a free country," Billy exclaimed; "it is somethin' like high trees—n, as it were. I wish th' thing would stick fast purty soon, and there would be some hopes o' my gittin' out with a whole skin. Seems ter me that it will be gittin' out of th' fryin'-pan inter th' fire when I get there, anyhow. I'll be lost in th' woods, an' mebbe some hungry bear will come along an' make a feast o' me. If I could keep this thing up fer a while longer I would do it, fer then I might come ter some town. That can't be did, though, so I'll have ter do th' best I kin under th' sarcumstances. If he could behold me jist now, I wonder what Inspector Br—Hello! th' thing has stuck fast, sure as guns! an' now th' next thing fer me ter do is ter git down."

Sure enough, the balloon had caught fast in one of the trees, and the boy lost no time in making it doubly secure by means of the end of the rope that had been dragging from the bottom.

When this was done he untied the other rope from around his feet, having of course made himself secure in the branches of the tree, and a short time later was on the ground all safe and sound.

"There!" he cried, "I am out of another p'izen diffikilty; an' mebbe I won't make it interestin' fer old Clovertops when I git back ter Gotham."

Of course Billy was lost. When he reached the ground he did not know north from south, and it would have been of no use to him if he had. There was only one thing for him to do, and that was to push on in some direction, and trust to Providence to bring him safely out.

By the light of the moon he could see his way at times, and managed to proceed with a fair degree of speed. He saw no wild animals larger than a rabbit, and it was not long before all his courage and self-confidence were restored and he was the same jolly Billy he had been at the start.

At the end of about two hours, he came out into a rough road, and while he was debating which way he should turn he heard the sound of an approaching team and wagon.

It had the sound of a heavy wagon, and in

truth it was, it being driven by a farmer on his way to market, or rather to a railroad station.

While he listened, the boy heard a carriage coming in the opposite direction.

"Here is goin' ter be fun," he reflected. "This looks ter me ter be a sort o' single-track line, an' how they are goin' ter pass is more'n I kin see."

The two teams came on, and met right opposite to the place where Billy was in hiding in the bushes.

The moment they met and stopped, the farmer and the driver of the carriage exchanged salutations that were not by any means complimentary to each other, and indulged in language that is forbidden in print.

"What is the matter here?" demanded some one from the carriage, and a man got out and looked around.

"Sweet pertaters, harp strings, an' peanuts!" Broadway Billy exclaimed under his breath, "if that feller ain't Whiteclover then I am dreamin'. What in th' name o' p'izen snakes is he doin' here? We're right in th' swim, Willyum, after all."

Whiteclover it was! He had now thrown aside his disguise, and the boy could not be mistaken. All his detective instinct rose to its height at once, and he took to the trail as naturally as a duck takes to water.

After a considerable amount of trouble and swearing the two teams managed to pass, and each went on its way. Under the bottom of the carriage, though, now hung the young street detective, Broadway Billy.

In about half an hour the carriage drew into the yard of a lonely country house, and there stopped. The men got out, and then, just as Billy had expected from what he had been able to overhear on the way, they helped out Luella Norseman and led her into the house.

Billy was now right on his muscle. He would rescue the young lady or die in the attempt.

As soon as the two men had entered the house, the driver of the carriage went on to turn his team, and this being his chance, Billy slipped down from under the carriage and stole into the house after the men.

Once there, he hid himself away, and waited to learn what would happen next.

The house was kept by an old woman, into whose charge the young lady was given by Whiteclover, and she was told to keep good watch over her and to see that she did not escape. This done, Whiteclover went out and settled with his driver, and then he and Stanhope retired to a room for the rest of the night.

Billy took care to learn where the young lady was placed, and after the young woman had come out of the room, locking the door after her, and the household slept, he went to the door of the room she was in, turned the key, and entered.

Luella was in bed sleeping, the old woman having undressed her and put her there.

Billy went to the bed, and after some little trouble succeeded in waking her.

She would have screamed, but the boy clapped his hand over her mouth and hastily whispered:

"Hush! don't make a bit of noise, Miss Norseman. I am yer friend, and I mean ter git ye out of here. Don't ye know me? I am Broadway Billy, th' same boy that told you of your danger this afternoon. Now I will go out while you git up and dress, and then will help you out of here. D'ye understand? Not a bit of noise."

Billy stood where the light of the moon fell upon him, and the girl recognized him.

"I see ye know me," he said, "an' now you do jest as I said an' I will save ye from th' p'izen rascals."

He went out of the room then, and the young lady hastened to follow his directions. In a few minutes she was dressed, and opened the door and stepped out into the hall. Billy was there to meet her, and together they passed down the stair and out into the open air.

Billy knew that there was no time to be lost, so he hastened the girl along the road as fast as she could walk, telling her of his adventure as they went.

Many times he had to stop to allow his charge to rest, but they pushed on with all the energy they could, and about daylight came to a little town where there was a railroad station.

Billy had no money, Whiteclover having robbed him of everything, as shown, but Luella had enough to pay their fares, and within another hour they were on their way to the city.

The young lady was about exhausted, and slept most of the way down, but Billy, who was more used to hard knocks, was about as fresh as ever.

When they reached the city Billy conducted

his charge to the home of her lover, whose address she gave him, and set out then, after first going home to get hat and coat to find Detective Speare and report to him.

Speare listened to his story in amazement.

"The hand of Providence was in it, boy," he declared. "There has been a big time up there at the old country house, when they found their prisoner gone, and there will be a bigger time when we get hold of the rascals. They have no idea that you have had a hand in the game, and it will be fun to see their faces when we spring our trap on them."

Speare took out warrants for the arrest of Mrs. Fauntleroy and her daughter, as well as Jasper Treetop and the other rascals concerned, and the two women and Treetop were arrested and lodged in jail.

This done, the detective and officers watched at the station for the arrival of Whiteclover and his accomplice, and when they made their appearance, some time in the afternoon, they were "scooped in."

Broadway Billy was on hand to see the arrest, and going up to Whiteclover, he said:

"You see I am on deck yet, old hoss. You can't kill me. Why, that balloon was th' very thing that balked yer little game. It was a splendid ride, too, and I am ever so much obliged to ye fer it. How d'ye feel? I tell ye there is no rest fer th' wicked in this world, an' if you fellers will go inter all sorts o' villainy, you must expect ter git stung. It is only th' honest game that will come out ahead in th' long run."

It was a victory complete.

When the case came to trial, Broadway Billy was one of the principal witnesses against the plotters, and the case went against them heavily.

They were all punished, as they deserved, and Billy was handsomely rewarded.

Old Mr. Gildersleeve pushed the case to the bitter end, and Miss Norseman was put in possession of all her dead father's wealth. The other two guardians are now holding forth in prison.

The proud Bermuda deserted her mother as soon as signs of trouble arose, and at last accounts was earning a precarious living by singing on the variety stage.

In due time Miss Norseman was married to Albert Tierson, and they are living as happy as all true lovers deserve to live. Luella wanted to set Billy up handsomely in business, but the boy would not hear to it.

He insisted that he was going to be self-made, or he wouldn't be made at all.

A few days after the arrest of the rascals concerned in the plot against Miss Norseman, there was a big fire on a certain street in the city, and the house of Prof. Appletree was burned to the ground. With the house perished the great flying machine, and as the professor was never seen again, it was supposed that he, too, was lost in the fire.

The play is over, and we ring down the curtain.

Broadway Billy and his thin partner are still doing business at the old stand, and are doing well.

When Billy told about this adventure to his partner, the eyes of the latter did bulge with wonder, as Billy had predicted, and Skinny went and bought stuff immediately with which to drape their stand in mourning.

"One more case will wind you up, Billy," he declared, "an' I may as well be prepared for th' occasion. You see I am willin' ter show due respect fer ye."

"I feel duly grateful, Skinny, that I assure ye," responded Billy, "but I am afraid that you won't have th' chance ter go inter mournin' fer me. I have reached th' p'int where I begin ter think that I was born ter be hanged. It seems that I can't be killed in any other sort o' way. But one thing you kin set down fer fact and keep it in mind, and that is that I am on hand yet fer any sort o' p'izen diffikilties that sprout up, in which I kin take a hand. You kin proclaim it from th' housetops that Willyum o' Broadway casts his vote on th' side o' justice and right, every time."

THE END.

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